Covering Interactive & Multimedia Entertainment

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

December 1993
Number 113
47209

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Circle Reader Service #56

Edward Grabowski's

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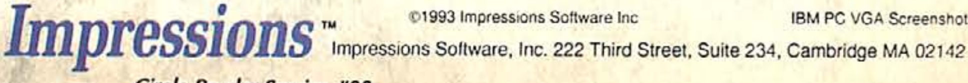


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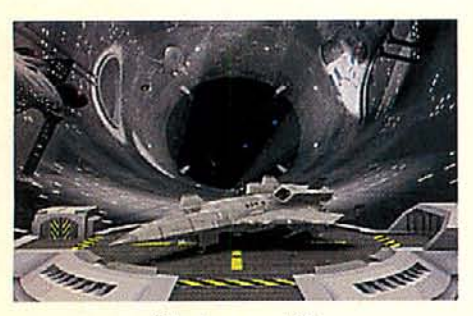


Circle Reader Service #80

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



Arena pg. 28
Illustration by David Meneham



Privateer pg. 132



Pinball Survey pg. 110

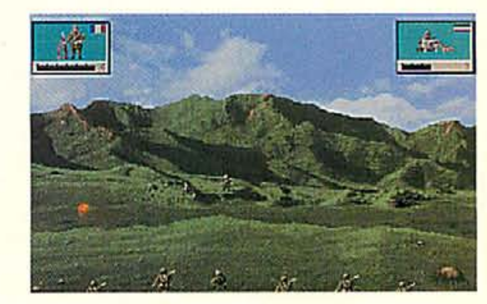
FEATURES

KIDS & COMPUTERS

COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD



Battles Of The South Pacific pg. 228



The Great War pg. 252

DEPARTMENTS

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Psalms 9:1-2

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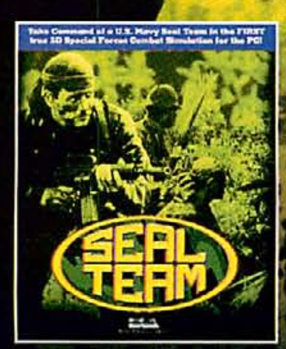


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Circle Reader Service #121



The Sub-Standard In Computer Software

by Johnny L. Wilson

State of the Magazine: This is a very exciting time in the history of *Computer Gaming World.* Not only are we creating magazines of record size, but we are watching the world of entertainment software completely restructure itself. The big deals which occur almost daily within the telecommunications industry are going to impact the world of interactive entertainment in a big way. Now, it is affecting the industry at the corporate level (capitalization, strategic alliances and long-range planning). Next, it will affect software publishers at the development level (new interfaces, metaphors and concepts for new kinds of games and different markets and delivery systems). Later, it will affect you, the computer gamers, when new products reach you via different media. We want you to rest assured that *CGW* will stay abreast of these developments, attempt to keep you informed of the potential impact on your life and hobby, and "still" provide the comprehensive coverage of computer games that we have always sought to provide. Even when you see pages covering technologies and alliances that don't seem immediately relevant, we will strive to make clear what the impact will be on you. No matter what kinds of coverage you see in CGW, it is there because we answered the following question in the affirmative, "Will it be interesting and useful to our readers?"

Some have asked why we are so "trade-oriented," wondering why we bother with conference reports and company profiles. We think they are integral to understanding where the hobby is going. You can't really understand where the products are going and why without understanding the people and companies that make them. Some sources have claimed that we are "going cartridge" and diluting our computer game coverage. We will cover "cartridge games" in the same way we have always covered them, only when the software seems of the quality that it would be of interest to our readers.

As Editor, I hope these assurances will allay any fears that astute readers may have entertained upon seeing how large the magazine is getting and reflecting upon the Ziff-Davis acquisition of *Computer Gaming World.* Yes, you will see us try different types of editorial as the world of interactive entertainment continues to evolve. Yes, you will see us adopt a more friendly, conversational tone as we reach out to more and more new gamers. No, you will not see us throw out the PC with the bath water and no, you will not see us remove the strategy and replay articles that have kept the hard-core gamers coming back for over 12 years. We're still the same folks. We still want to be bigger AND better.

State of the Industry: Once again, an Origin release has touched the nerves of computer gamers and sent forth a cry of, "Aren't we ever going to have computer games that we can just load and play?" Yes, the developers of the infamous late and unlamented Voodoo Memory Manager have done it again. *Privateer* offers a new required calibration routine for joysticks that drives some gamer's controllers absolutely berserk. Of course, Origin often gets the blame for this type of thing because they are so often pushing the limits of state-of-the-art technology. Yet, the most recent problem points out a mindset in the computer game industry that needs to be changed—resistance to standardization.

At the recent Fall Conference of the Software Publishers Association, I asked the chairman of a committee on standards when we were going to get installation routines and drivers standardized to the point that gamers can merely load and play. This easy-going fellow grumbled that the consumer software industry can't even agree to standardize on a box.

Yes, there is the problem in a nutshell. This industry cannot even do what almost every other mass market consumer industry (including the video game market) manages to do—standardize the packaging. What advantage would this have for the consumer? It would provide easier storage for one thing. We could even build special shelves for our computer games, just like we do for video tapes, compact discs, cassette tapes and most books. It would enable retailers to put more boxes on the shelves, simultaneously reducing the shelf space wars that kill some titles before they have a chance to catch on, and meaning, potentially, a wider range of titles from which gamers can choose. Incidentally, it would reduce some of the pulp waste from oversized boxes full of air.

One marketing director protested that they used recycled materials for their oversized air-boxes. We pointed out that it takes a percentage of new pulp, even when using recycled materials. She said that they needed weird boxes to get the customer's attention. I said that the video-tape publishers didn't. I also noted that the audio CD folks don't need weird boxes (though one of their standards does use wasteful packaging for "security" purposes).

Further, major retailers like Sears, Kmart and Walmart have warned software publishers that they will no longer stock merchandise that does not fit a standardized size. Instead of taking this opportunity to solve a problem, software publishers are griping about the greedy retailers trying to stifle their creativity. How ironic! Here are the experts in mass merchandising trying to help the software publishers reach the market they've always dreamed of reaching—the masses—and the software publishers want to stay in their niche of origami boxes.

In such an industry, I suppose it's useless to ask for standardized sound and peripheral drivers. After all, we want to do our own thing, even if it costs money and potential customers every day that the chaos continues. CGW

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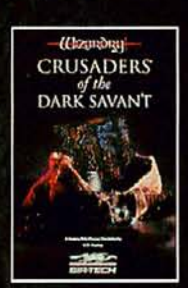




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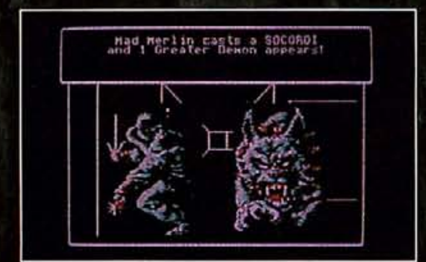


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1991	Top Role-Playing Game, April 1991 *Computer Gaming World*





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Circle Reader Service #123

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The Latest News From The Gaming World

Rock, Technology, and Junk Bonds Converge on Multimedia

Never was the "convergence of media" so clearly illustrated as in the announcement of the new **7th Level** multimedia company. Founded by former **MicroGrafx** co-founder George Grayson and former *Pink Floyd* saxophonist Scott Page, 7th Level will produce entertainment and educational titles for the PC and Machintosh computers.

Grayson and Page had previously collaborated in entertainment and technological extravaganzas on behalf of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Their event, the *Grand Scientific Musical Theater* held in conjunction with Fall COMDEX '92, was a computer-controlled, live multimedia spectacular in which digital technology and special effects were integrated with both live performances by Hollywood stars and computer-generated characters. Both Grayson and Page felt that the performance was so successful that Grayson lured a team of advanced programmers away from MicroGrafx to handle the computer end of the business, and Page turned over the facilities of his multimedia production house, **Walt Tucker** (named after Walt Disney and Preston Tucker, two of Page's favorite visionaries). The two partners added music producer Bob Ezrin (producer on Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, Alice Cooper's *Killer*, and KISS' *Destroyer* albums, plus being credited as the producer that encouraged Peter Gabriel to go solo) as co-chairman.

Scott Page, Howie Mandel, Bob Ezrin and George Grayson —Multimedia Quartet

To add further to the feeling of convergence, funding for the new company was provided by a consortium put together by former **Drexel Burnham Lambert** "junk bond king" Michael Milken and **Lorimar Telepictures** co-founder Merv Adelson. Milken's current dream is to build the Education and Entertainment Network, so the formation of 7th Level had a natural synergy with his overall goal.

In keeping with the convergence feeling, the company's first release will be *Tuneland*, a children's sing-along program with Howie Mandel as the voice for the lead character. *Tuneland* features 42 songs and more than 12,000 hand-drawn animation cels (7th Level has not officially announced their relationship with an animation house) that represent about 40 minutes of actual footage. 7th Level expects to be able to produce products like *Tuneland* on a six month production cycle, compared to the nine to eighteen month production cycle of most multimedia products.

Children's titles, like *Tuneland*, will be published under the *Desktop Playground Series* label, and titles for older gamers are on the way. Asked about specific plans for entertainment that would be geared toward an older audience, Page told *CGW* that the first product in that series would be unlike anything currently available on computer. He hinted that the game would involve comedy, action and role-playing, but would be oriented around an adult, variety entertainment show.



Sierra Secures Savoir Faire

Sierra On-Line (NASDAQ: SIER) has finalized a relationship with France's **Coktel Vision S.A.** which was initiated in mid-1992 (*CGW* #99, p. 16). Under that original agreement, Sierra would become the exclusive publisher/distributor of Coktel Vision's educational and entertainment products for the United States. On October 20, 1993, Sierra announced that it had reached an agreement in principle to acquire Coktel Vision for $5 million up front and another $5 million plus upon reaching certain revenue and profitability targets over the next four years. In addition, Coktel Vision will assume responsibility for handling European sales for both their own products and those of Sierra. The agreement is subject to French government approval, but should be final by late October. Coktel Vision is the publisher of the Gobliins and Inca series of computer games, as well as an entire line of educational products.



GLOBAL DOMINATION






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Finally, you can conquer your friends in state-of-the-art graphic splendor! Amass armies with your choice of units, then invade! Watch your back, though - you'll need to divide your forces with care to avoid being conquered yourself!

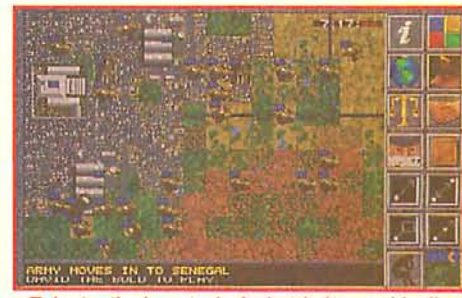
Global Domination is turn-based and features modem play; a wide variety of historic opponents from which to choose; random world generator; large number of units; spies; diplomacy & subversive activists; by far the best graphics and sound ever seen in a conquest game; and even more fun than Napoleon had at Waterloo!



Take your ego for a rollercoaster ride as you see your empire rise and fall!



Here's where you amass your armies and make your moves!



Take tactical control of a battle in graphically stunning animated combat!

IBM PC VGA Screenshots



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Circle Reader Service #81

Steve Jackson vs. The Secret Service

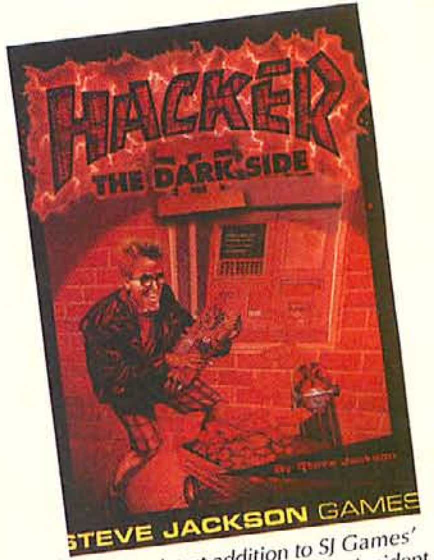
Game Maker Appeals For Electronic Freedom

Steve Jackson Games, publishers of such popular games as *Illuminati, Car Wars* and the *GURPS* role-playing system, have filed an appeal in their suit against the U.S. Secret Service. The suit involved a Secret Service raid of the Steve Jackson Games office in 1990, in which government agents seized three computers, including the company's BBS. At the time, the company was working on their *GURPS Cyberpunk* role-playing supplement which one Secret Service agent claimed was "a handbook for computer crime."

Although the Secret Service found no evidence of criminal activity on the confiscated computers, they returned the equipment months later, after having read and erased the contents of the BBS and destroying one computer. SJ Games won on the major counts of the suit and was awarded $50,000 for damages and $250,000 in attourney's fees. The judge did, however, find for the government on the "interception" count under the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, ruling that the Secret Service's confiscation of the BBS computer was not an "interception" as defined by the ECPA. Attourneys for Steve Jackson and the Electronic Frontier Foundation will appeal this finding, believing that the Fifth Circuit Appeals Court will reverse the decision and thereby establish a stronger precendent.

The Justice Department has preserved their right to appeal on the counts that SJ Games won.

Says Steve Jackson, "I hope they do appeal. I think the Fifth Circuit will uphold what we've already won, which will make the precedent carry far more weight. Other cases like this are coming up, and the government has to learn to keep its hands off of bulletin boards and e-mail."



The latest addition to SJ Games' Hacker card game spoofs the incident with the Secret Service.

Go U S West, Young Machine

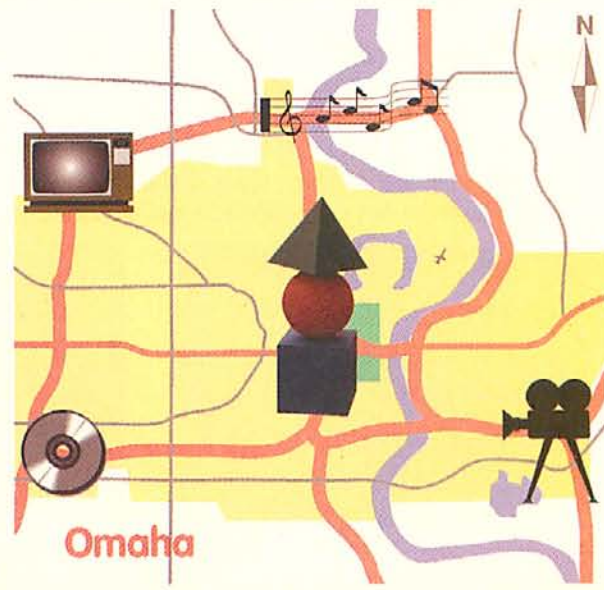
3DO and U S West Partner In Interactive TV Test

On October 4, 1993, **3DO** and **U S West Communications** announced their intention to work together in providing the set-top terminal (STT) for the communications company's 1994 test in 1994. Omaha, Nebraska is the site for the test where, pending FCC approval, U S West intends to test its new system to provide interactive entertainment, educational and informational programming, home shopping and video on demand via a communications network.

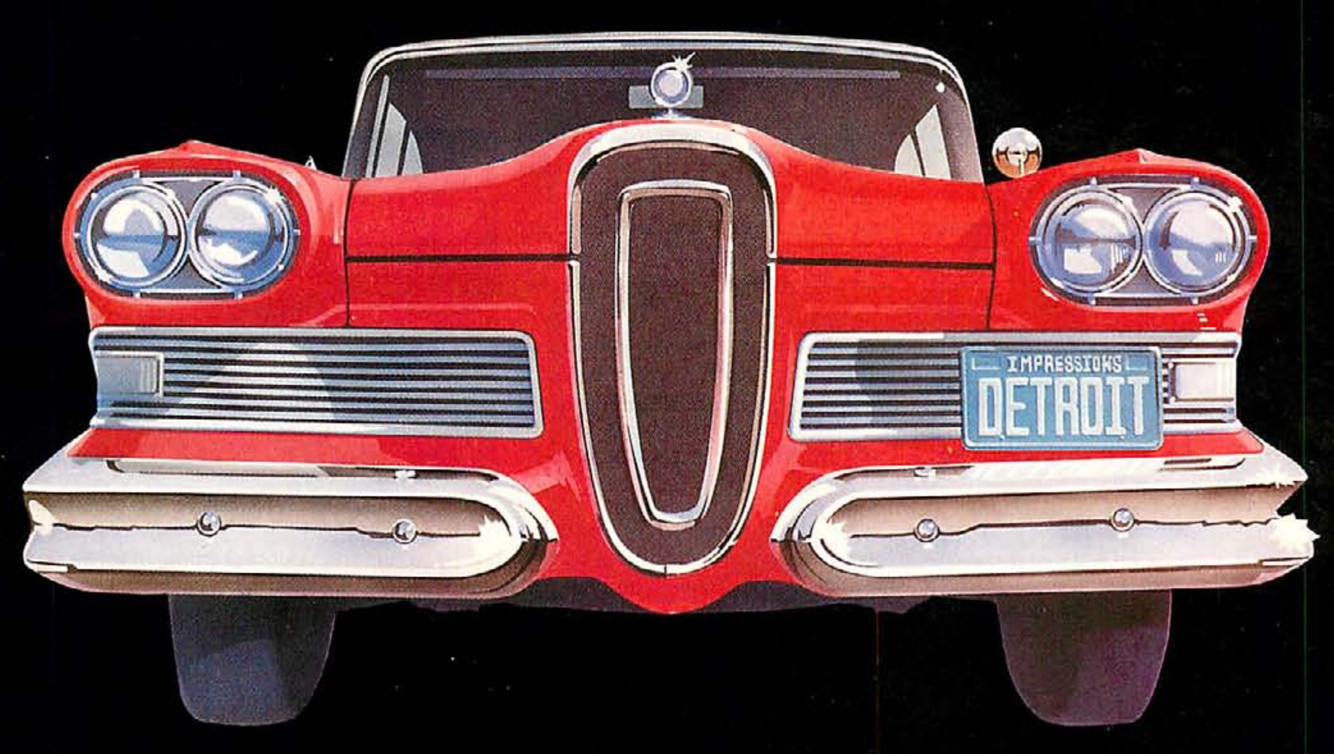
The test, which will incorporate the same graphics and animation technology into the STT as that in the 3DO Interactive Multiplayer, is expected to prove the viability of 3DO technology to serve as a standard for STTs for other cable television and telephone company projects. As CEO Trip Hawkins observed, "We want to create a worldwide standard." He further commented, "We're demonstrating that our new technology can be used in any stand-alone or networked environment."

Ironically, the announcement was made less than a week before *CGW*'s earlier interview with Hawkins appeared (CGW #112, p. 11) in which the CEO was questioned about 3DO's plans with regard to such tests. In the earlier interview, the CEO had expressed reservations about such tests because of the capacity for hardware manufacturers to get stuck with thousands of kludged units that serve no other purpose than to function for a brief time period during a trial run. Thus, the U S West agreement implies that 3DO feels confident that they will exit the test with a solid prototype in hand.

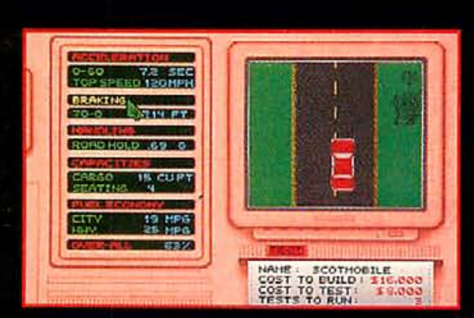
Omaha 3DO owners will not be able to simply hook up their new multiplayers to the U S West system, however. The STT units are a special streamlined design that will only incorporate the processing and graphics capabilities of the home machine. Currently, neither telephone companies nor cable television providers seem convinced that it is in their interest to include a CD-ROM drive in their STTs. 3DO President Robert Faber informed *CGW* at the Software Publishers Association's Fall Conference that the current generation of 3D0 players will *not* connect to the networks and that the company has no intention of attempting to sell STTs with CD-ROM drives to network providers. **CGW**



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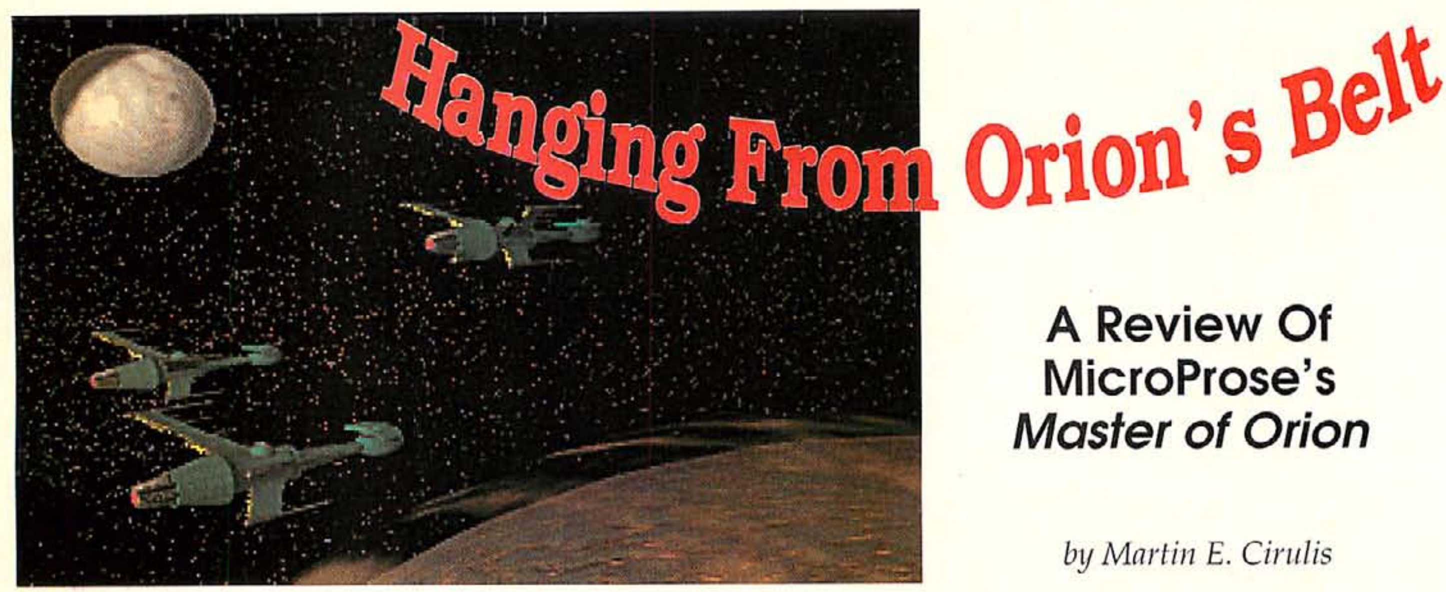
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Circle Reader Service #82



Hanging From Orion's Belt

A Review Of MicroProse's *Master of Orion*

by Martin E. Cirulis

(Excerpts from Black Box recording ISN INDEFATIGABLE, recovered from space debris, Tarandor System. 12/23/2435)

"...amn how long it takes, get me that tac analysis, pronto!"

"Yes, Ma'am!"

"Captain Boone! Sensors reading five battle wagons coming out of hyperspace behind us."

"Relax Ensign. Those are Meklar Cruisers, they're on our side. Or at least they were last time we made planetfall. Just maintain target lock on that Sakkran Destroyer squadron."

"Ion Cannons at full power, Captain!"

"Excellent! Fire on my command. Tell McCloud I'm going to need full maneuvering power if we're going to dodge those Stinger Missiles. Helm, bring us to—What was that!!"

"Th—That was the RODNEY, Ma'am. She...she just shook apart. Sensors read some kind of Graviton Beam coming from the Sakkran fleet."

"Sweet Boudica!!! The lizards have gravity weapons! Shields Full! Helm, full 180. Emergency Eva—"

(End Tape)

Another world, another fleet, another battle. It's just another day in the neighborhood brought to you by MicroProse's latest wargame, *Master of Orion (MOO).* This piece of science fiction software invites you to "Build an Empire to span the Galaxy" in the finest *Civilization* and *Global Conquest* traditions, and probably only the most pedestrian of us could refuse such an offer without a trial spin. This turn-based game is easy enough to understand that you can jump right in with only the barest riffling of the clear and concise (perhaps too concise) manual. But trust me, you will dog-ear this book in a hurry as you flip back to get the scoop on surprise after surprise.



"The Stars, Like Grains Of Sand..."

Though I am sure MicroProse is most comfortable with comparisons to its own products, *MOO* is better summed up by the phrase: "It's like *Spaceward HO!*, but with all the options." The setup is pretty basic. You start with a single world amidst a spread of stars. The stars are home to hundreds of worlds waiting to be explored, exploited and developed, and somewhere out there are five alien races with the same situation and agenda: Control a majority of the known galaxy and eliminate all who stand in the way. It's standard spaceploitation fare, but where *MOO* distinguishes itself is in the details.

The title is the first clue that there is a little something extra afoot. The "Orion" to be mastered is a forgotten world, and it holds some very important technologies which go to the first race to successfully colonize her. You'd think that would be enough incentive for a race to plant their flag there, but there's more. Given that this world is a treasure trove of techno-tidbits from a long dead race, any scientific research budgeted on this world yields quadruple the normal results. Now what would you pay?! As it turns out,



quite a lot. If you take this world, be prepared to hold on to her dearly because you can count on visitors popping in to say "Hi!" with a few dozen well-armed battle wagons.

While it is possible to win the game if some other race gets to Orion first, it will definitely make your quest for domination harder. This objective is constant from game to game, but its location is random so there is always incentive to send your scouts out as fast and far as possible. This galactic "carrot-on-a-stick" helps to pull this game ahead of the generic spaceploitation pack.

Even the galaxy map distinguishes itself from that of other games with 13 different environmental classes of worlds ranging from Terran standard through frozen Tundra to

Master of Orion



TITLE:	Master of Orion
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16MHz, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 14MB hard drive space; supports Ad Lib, PAS, Roland MT-32, Sound Blaster sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	Steve Barcia
PUBLISHER:	MicroProse Hunt Valley, MD (410) 771-1151

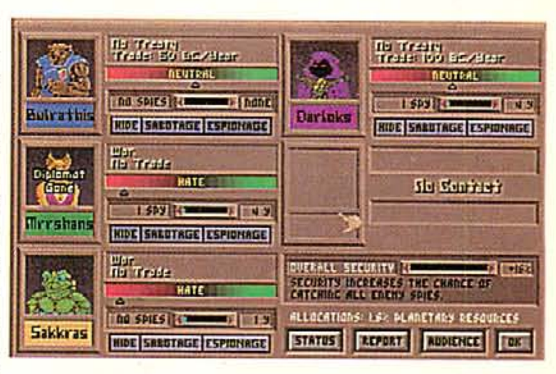
highly radioactive. Each of these worlds can have any of eight special characteristics that can modify population growth, industrial output or technological research. On a map that can hold up to 108 stars, this offers a lot of variation, with some dog worlds that are only colonized as a last resort, and some gems that are constantly struggled over.

The map even has its own kind of galactic "terrain" in the form of Nebulae that retard movement and disrupt the shields of ships and planets *a la* a certain *Wrathful* movie. With all of these worlds, nebulae and characteristics set randomly for every new game, it will take a long time before a player becomes bored with the setup...not to mention the odd random events that intrude upon your war-torn little Galaxy. I don't want to ruin any surprises, but I would suggest boning up on your "Menace from Space" *Star Trek* episodes, both old and new.

Caught Up In The Space Race

As per the popular trend in sci-fi wargames, a large part of *MOO* is dedicated to research and development; but unlike other games, where technology is represented by merely a level, *MOO* gives you 50 basic levels of technological development in six different disciplines (Computers, Construction, Force Fields, Planetology, Propulsion, and Weapons). Most of these first 50 levels result in actual named developments. If you manage to exhaust these, then you can still make advancements, though in a more generic way, just as you could develop "Futuristic Advancements" in *Civilization.*

The power of these touches to give the game its own character can not be understated. It is much more satisfying to see the Armored Exoskeleton your Construction Techs have developed, rather than a generic window telling you that you have achieved "Construction Level 24." Each development leads to two or three new devices to research, so one can also make strategic choices within each discipline. If one is feeling badly pressed by militant neighbors, one can choose to push the advancement of armor and leave factory efficiency for a later phase, or perhaps one can trade another race for the technology or simply fund enough spy cells to steal it from them.



MOO also adds another nice touch to the tech race genre by acknowledging that technology becomes cheaper and smaller as one advances beyond it. Since shipbuilding in this game is based upon placing components into four standard hull sizes that have finite internal tonnage, this little addition creates a whole new life for older weapons. No longer are devices completely obsolete as soon as a new one comes along. It is true that lasers (the basic Level 1 weapon) are made obsolete by mid-level shields, but most other weapons can do a little damage against the highest shield strengths. Because of this, it becomes viable at times to use 20 semi-obsolete weapons in the space that one new one would take up. Twenty little hits are sometimes worth a lot more than one big one. This kind of technological flexibility makes for another great tactical facet of the game, and it's refreshing to see a little innovation in what is quickly becoming a standard aspect of the genre.

"This Means War!"

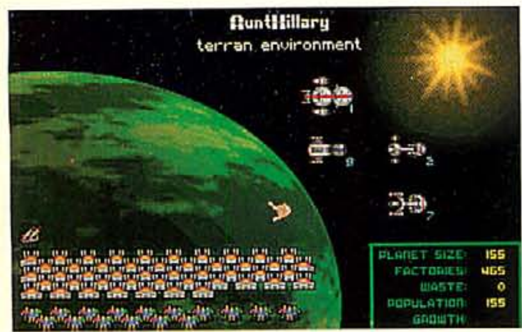
No matter how you play this game, conflict will be a part of it. It is in this arena that you will be tested both as a strategist and a tactician. Strategically, you must balance exploration and development of new worlds with technological research and the production of warships and planetary defenses to prepare for war with at least some of your alien neighbors.

Now just because conflict is inevitable doesn't mean you can't spend a few game years preparing the way through less direct methods. Diplomacy, Spying and Trade are all present in *MOO* as they are in *Civilization,* but they are more abstract and subtle in this game. There are no specific units for these functions in *MOO;* instead they are handled through manipulation of your budget. Alien leaders with whom you have spatial contact can be reached at most times during the game, unless they get angry enough to withdraw their diplomat, and you can use this route to exchange technology, forge alliances or threaten war, create trade agreements or simply kiss up to a more powerful race through gifts of money or technology. The trade routes lose money during the initial years when they are being established, but slowly grow more and more profitable until they become a major consideration in declaring war. Sure, the Alkari may be in your way, but their peaceful trade is worth a Dreadnought every two or three years. It's something more to think about.

Spy networks in alien empires are established by pouring money into them, but their effects are not quite so blatant. You can tell your spies to merely hide out in a friendly empire, or you can tell them to become active by stealing technology or blowing things up. Nothing paves the way for an invasion like exploding defenses. Usually a race will object to the use of these agents, often lowering their relationship rating with you to the point of war. But if your spies are lucky enough they can complete their missions without revealing their race, or better yet, they can pin their deeds on another race and thereby create diplomatic mayhem. Of course the flip-side of this option is that the same thing can be done to you. There's nothing quite like the look of an enraged Bulrathi diplomat declaring war over something you didn't even do.



Economic decisions are made at the planetary level through the use of slider bars. Planetary economic output can be applied to five areas: Shipbuilding, Defenses, Industry, Ecology and Technology research. Needless to say, the latter three begin to get neglected during those long galactic wars, but if you let things slide too far you'll end up with an inefficient, poisoned and backward empire with lots of weapons that don't work very well.



After all this preparation, it would be a shame if the actual battles were over quickly or were so convoluted that all the fancy equipment you researched never got used. Have no fear, *MOO* strikes a solid balance between detail and playability. Ships face each other in groups defined by ship type across a screen-sized spacefield 11 x 8 movement points large. This field will occasionally contain a smattering of obstructive asteroids and the world in dispute if it is colonized. Ships move and fire in an initiative system based on their engine class and maneuverability rating. Weapons can be fired at any target, at any point during a move, so long as an enemy ship or world comes within range of that specific weapon type. Missiles and torpedoes will track a target from across almost the entire board. Here detail is again rich as each weapon or special device has its own particular pyrotechnic show when fired or activated.

The player is given a choice between running the ships or letting the computer move them, but since combat is so straightforward I see this latter option being used very rarely. The computer is a fairly strong, if not very subtle opponent in the tactical arena, and it usually uses its technological advances to their most damaging potential. Ship groups can retreat from battle at any time after surviving a combat round and will warp back to the nearest friendly planet if their side eventually loses, or will rejoin their original fleet after the battle if victory is the result.

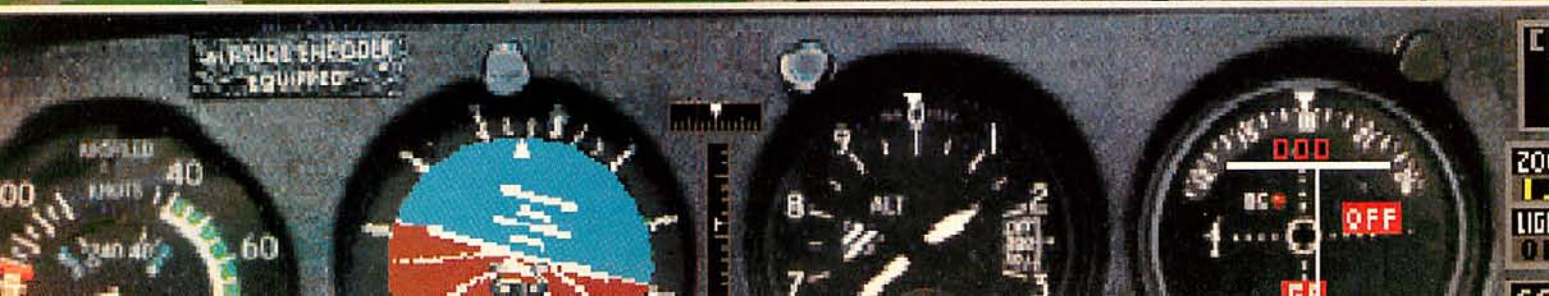
Once space is secured, a fleet can bomb a world clean of inhabitants and factories, or await the arrival of troop transports sent from neighboring worlds. Transports carry population away from the origin world to arrive as troopers at the target world. Ground combat is a quick, they-die/you-die round by round affair that occurs automatically until one race stands alone on the planet surface. Numerous technical advances can give troops combat modifiers that can turn a fair numerical fight into a rout. Capturing worlds this way is advantageous in that you get to keep all the expensive factories, you don't lose diplomacy points with your neighbors by burning worlds down to bedrock, and if you capture enough factories there is a chance you will be able to get some new technology from your enemy. The only drawback to this kind of combat is (and here *MOO* compares to the original boardgame of *Civilization)* that it's very population intensive; trying to seize two or three worlds this way in a few turns can deplete your empire of citizens and leave a lot of factories standing idle.

Through Alien Eyes...

No discussion of *MOO* is complete without looking at the alien races involved. There are ten races that can fill any of six slots in a game; you choose one and how many other races







you wish to compete against, and the computer randomly selects the rest. Depending on your style of play, this selection could spell the difference between conquering the universe and being Galactic Second Banana. Each race has its own unique advantage and a philosophical point of view when it comes to interspecies relations.

The fact that only six of the ten are involved in any given game and that each racial advantage tends to change the shape of game play means that the replay value is very high. In a month of play there are still a couple of races I haven't fought for or against. And even more enjoyable is the fact I have to tinker with my grand strategy every time to allow for new opponents.

Advice To The Warlorn

There are two ways one can achieve ultimate victory in *MOO*. The first and most bloodthirsty is to simply exterminate every other race in the Galaxy. The second option still involves its share of conquering, but it is more political in nature. It seems that every so often a tele-conference of all the racial leaders is called where they (and you) can vote on who should be the ruler of the universe. The number of votes you can cast is directly proportional to the size of your population, and the two nominees for Galactic leader are from the two largest empires. In order for any leader to be crowned Master of Orion, they must hold a two-thirds majority in council. Sometimes your allies will vote for you or, if you are still a minor power, expect you to vote for them.

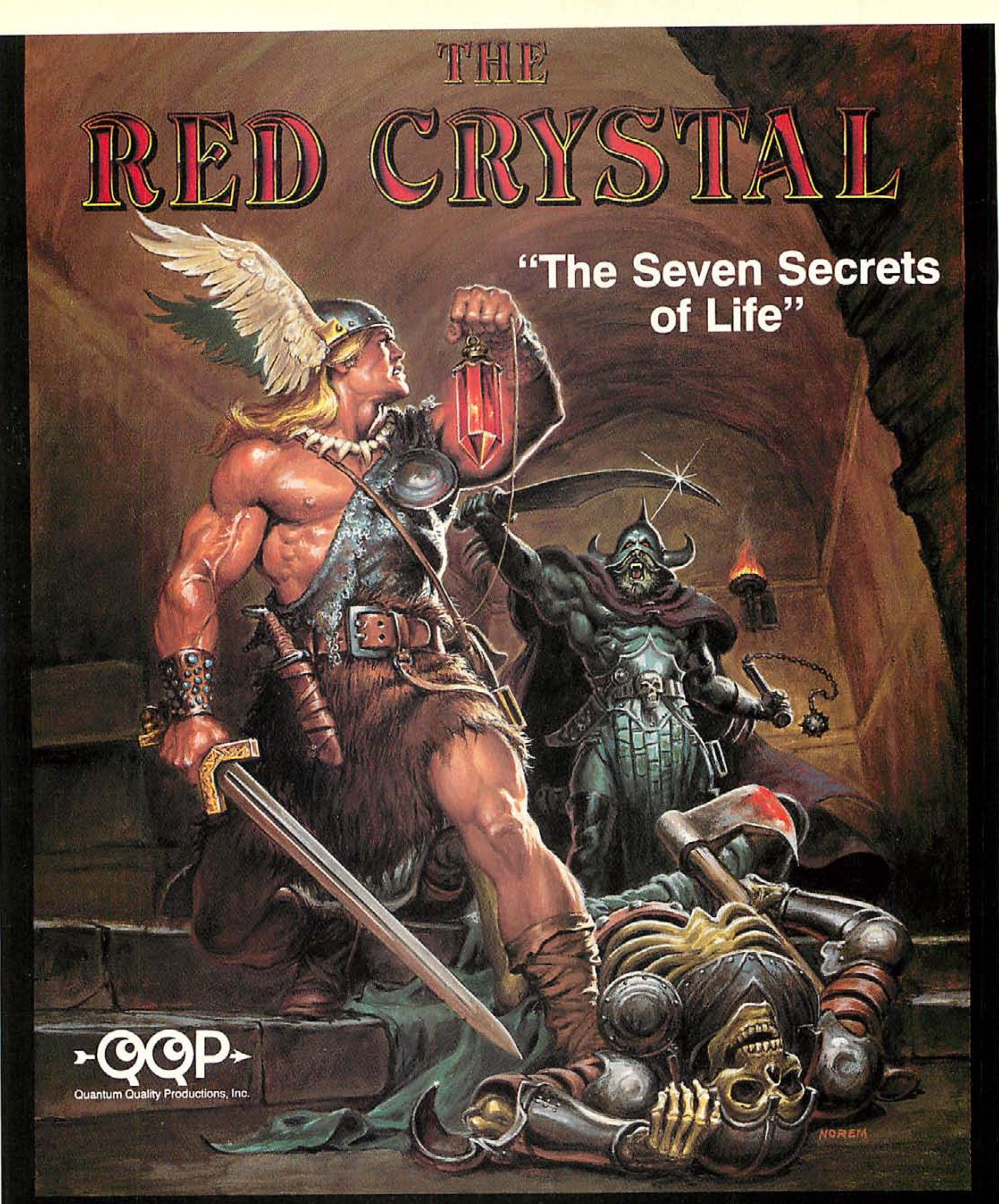


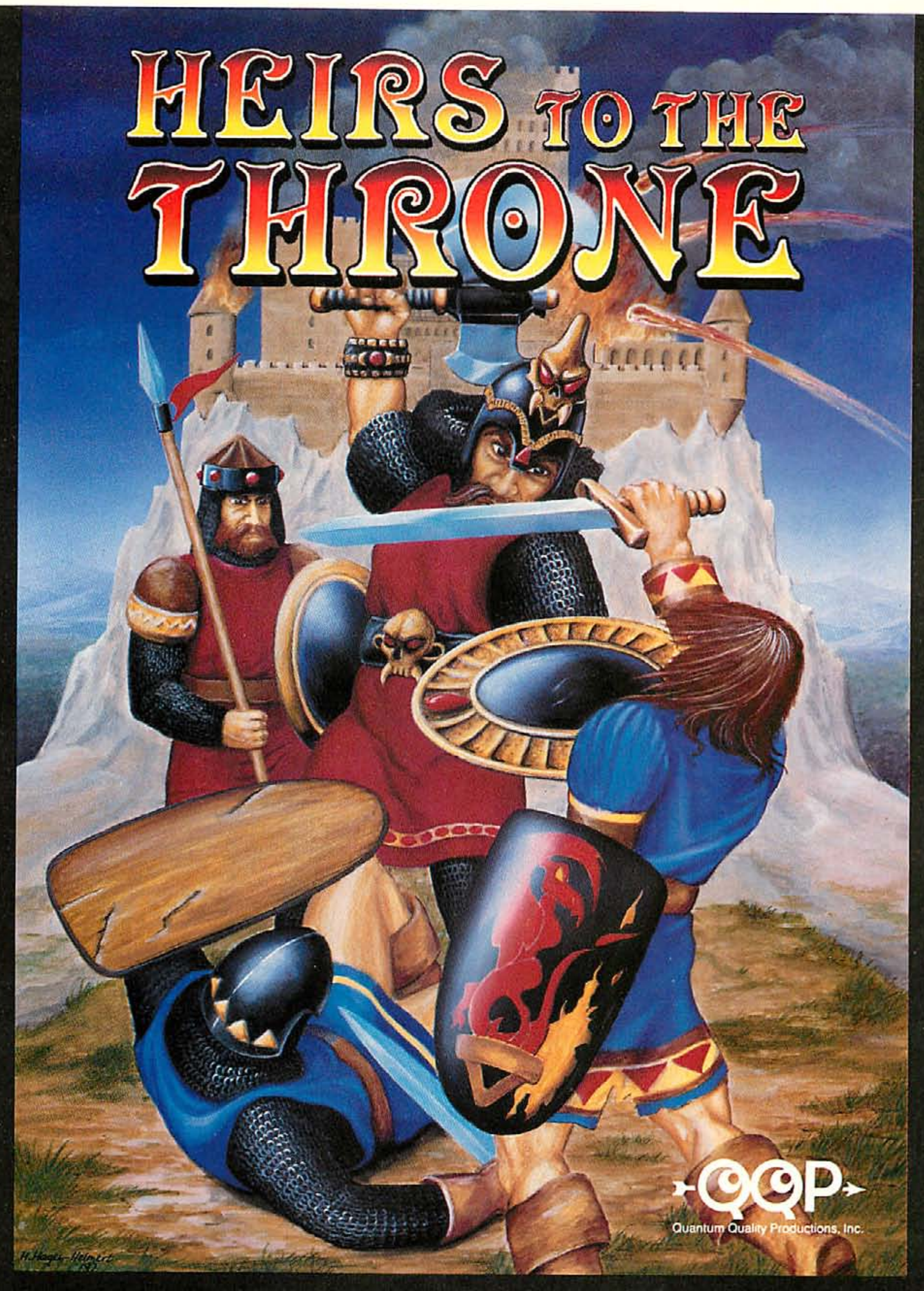
This system is a novel way for a player to decide when they want out of a game. If they think their situation is untenable they can cast a swing vote for one of the two major powers, or simply abstain and bide their time for a better situation. Should an Orion Master be crowned against your wishes, you can choose to ignore the creation of a new Federation and pit yourself against the combined might of the joined races; needless to say, this is a long tough fight.

And The Stars Sing "MOO!"

Master of Orion is one of those games where one must actually put effort into finding something inadequate about the game design, and that in itself is probably the highest praise this reviewer can give a product. Yes, if I were an all-powerful being I might alter *MOO* to allow for more than six ship designs at a time, or make small ships a little more relevant, but these things matter little against such a well crafted piece of gaming software. As for the game's manual, it leaves many details to be desired, and without an index, it can be difficult finding the details that are included. But even in spite of this weakness, I and many gamers like me will be unable to resist this game's overwhelming power.

MOO should appeal to both hard-core and novice wargamers. The light touches and nods to classic sci-fi themes should draw in and entertain the general software public as well. This product will offer enough late nights and missed appointments to make it a definite Game of the Year candidate as well as Exhibit A in many divorce cases. My only regret is that my friends had to offer advice over my shoulder instead of playing against me. CGW

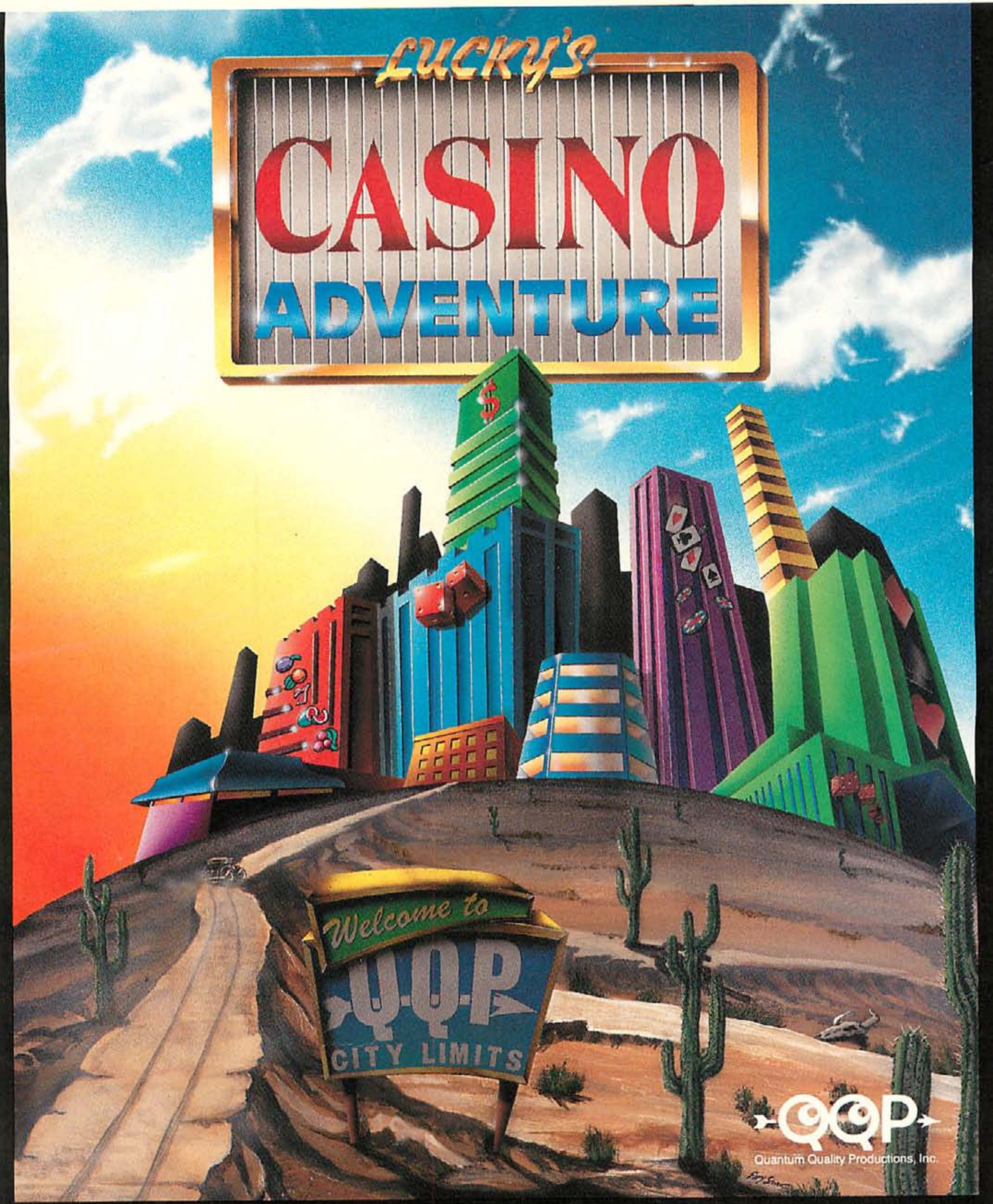

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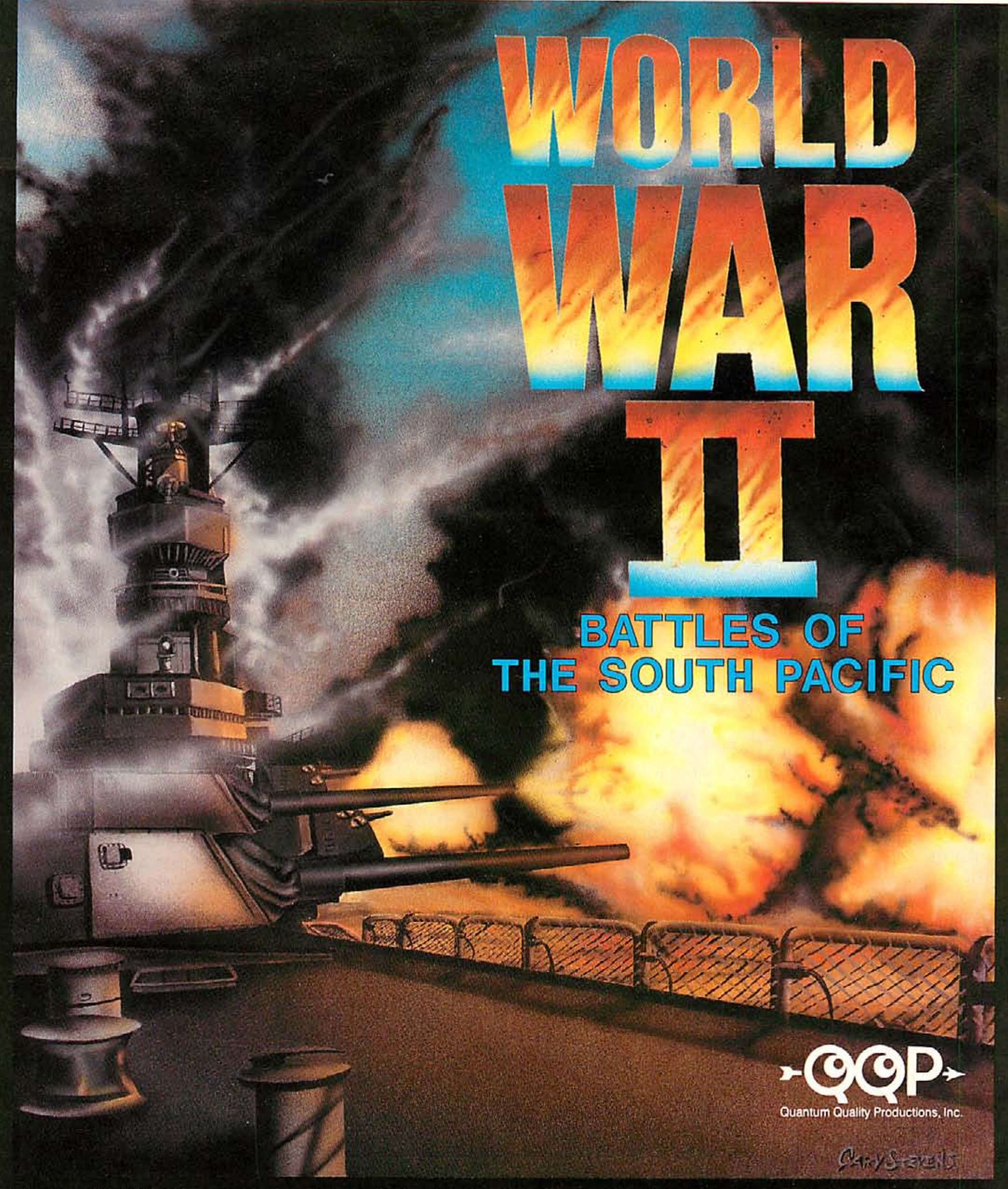
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Game On The Edge Of Forever

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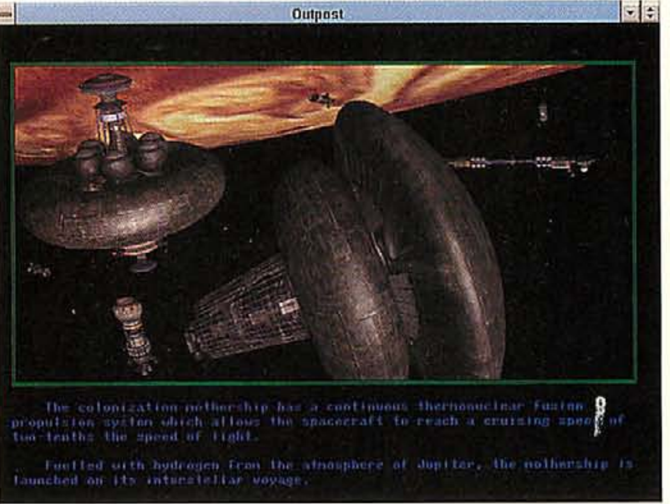
An Early Look At Sierra's *Outpost*

by Martin E. Cirulis

Martin Cirulis is a freelance writer and Science Fiction author who has recently completed a novel with Lucius Shepard. A space game connoisseur, he believes firmly in the "four eXs": explore, expand, exploit and exterminate.

Just when I felt confirmed in my opinion of the current trends in Science Fiction computer games, I literally stumbled across a new product that threw my assumptions into disarray. While attending the World Science Fiction Convention in San Francisco this past September, I noticed the **Sierra** banner flying proudly, and promptly shuffled through the crowd hoping to see some new adventure game demos or maybe even acquire some of the Mana of every writer at a convention: Free Stuff. Imagine my surprise when I realized the program on display *wasn't* another quality adventure game, but was an incredible looking *strategy* game called *Outpost.*

The surprises didn't stop there. Not only was this a strategy game, but it seemed to be designed for the CD-ROM format, and it was running from *Windows!* Also, while I stood there amazed I began to realize that not only was this game Science Fiction, but the science was so hard one could bounce a meteor off it. Needless to say, I had to know more and, after hastily scrawling "PRESS" on the back of a cab receipt and, sticking it in the brim of my hat, I corralled a couple of guys who looked suspiciously like designers and went about finding an explanation for this wonder.



"Your Mission, should you choose to accept it..."

According to Bruce Balfour and Jon Bock, head designer and project artist respectively, this is a game of a dark and heroic future. Our planet has been destroyed, but not before one massive SpaceArk has been built to carry away the legacy of Earth tended by her brightest and strongest citizens. The player takes the helm of this last desperate bid for survival and must make the decisions that will either shape the future of humanity or bring it to an end.

Although this plot may be a little familiar, the detail with which it has been executed will bring sighs of appreciation from even the most jaded SF gamer. For instance, the MotherShip is not just a recycled plot device from the Paramount prop department. This virtual vessel took over two months to design and implement in the game, and is a composite of theoretical NASA designs for Colony ships. The same can be said for almost all of the equipment to be dealt with in this game. All of it is realistic, carefully detailed, and lifted from the latest high frontier research, though I guess they will have to modify the probe designs somewhat.

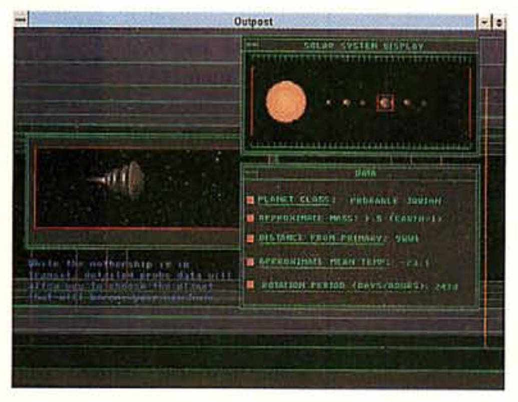
Of course, it's easier to lay hands on this kind of design information when the head programmer's last job was AI research for NASA. Bruce Balfour's obvious love of the subject really shows through in this project. He is sure enough of his craft that he is hoping to receive product endorsements from prominent figures in the Astronomy and Aerospace fields in return for a possible percentage of the proceeds being donated to various high frontier organizations.

"Will the last person leaving the Earth please shut off the lights?"

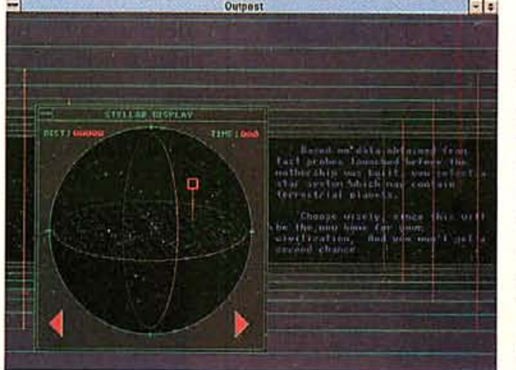
Outpost begins with a 25-year countdown to doomsday. The player has this scant quarter century to build a MotherShip, select the

appropriate equipment, and choose a staff of right-hand people. There will probably be very few sure bets here, and the gamer will be left pondering the possible troubles ahead and making educated guesses as to what combination of personnel and equipment will enhance survival potential. An open line of credit with the Psychic Friends Network probably wouldn't hurt during this phase.

When these choices are made, for better or worse, and old Terra Firma is crumbling into history, the Mother-Ship lumbers into the sea of stars and all personnel slip into suspended animation. But just before the lights go out in the captain's cubicle for a few decades, the player's character must make one more decision: Despite all this preparation, the course is not yet determined, and the player must point the expedition in the direction that will most likely lead to a new home.



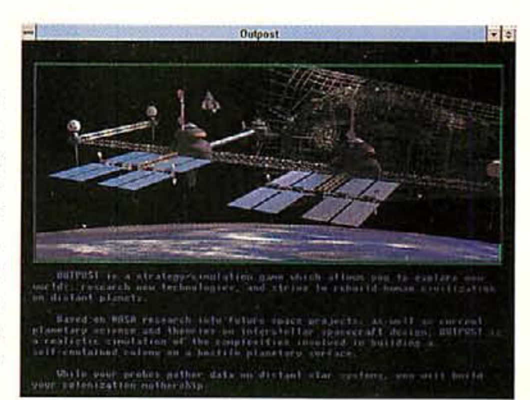
Again reflecting the realities in space exploration, Earth orbit telescopes have only been able to discover which stars are most likely to host Gas Giants (large planets like our Jupiter and Saturn). Such star systems promise the best chance of finding something smaller and more solid, but the player has no way of knowing if there are indeed more viable bodies until hearing the results from one of the scarce number of probes in the ship's inventory. Unfortunately, these probes only travel at slightly more than twice the Mother Ship's speed, so a general direction must be chosen first. At the halfway point, the player's character is awakened to analyze the more detailed probe telemetry and choose a final, fateful target system from the short list of likely candidates.



As if this wasn't enough to weigh on the mind of the savior of mankind, the game introduces a renegade faction within the expedition that not only helps themselves to a good portion of available supplies, but has struck out on its own in competition with the player's crew.

"If it's Tuesday, this must be Alpha Centauri."

Upon arrival at the target world, it becomes necessary to send down the robots from another detailed NASA model, The Seed Factory. This self-replicating robot factory prepares the colony zone for habitation and supplies the crew with the initial modules to be used as building blocks for Humanity's new home. Now the satisfying aspect of game play begins. The player must balance needs versus resources, work versus morale, and research versus production. The new world is not a stagnant one, it is a dynamic, dangerous place which requires the development of new skills and technologies in order to ensure survival and prosperity.



This means that in *Outpost*, the primary enemy isn't a marauding alien race or some ancient relic from galactic wars past, but capricious Fate herself. Bruce and Jon were perversely proud of the fact that players will not be able to build anything that won't break down, blow up, or just be swallowed whole in a ground quake. Entropy is alive and well at this *Outpost*. The player will be kept busy reacting to and researching counter-measures for a myriad of new and potentially devastating disasters. This is a game that shows how dangerous space really is without having to resort to triple-tentacled Escargot-men looking for dates.

Players who are skilled enough to craft a colony that can survive and prosper *will* eventually encounter the band of malcontents that checked out with those supplies. They will have done pretty well for themselves also, well enough to become viable competitors. This, in turn, leads to many areas where the player will have to decide whether to compete or cooperate. Since prime real estate and minerals are at a premium in the great dark, one can readily end up trading for desirable commodities in demand or for technologies in which the defector colony has pulled ahead of the player's colony. As in any trading situation, the key is to garner more than one proffers. Note that while raw force isn't an *Outpost* option in its current incarnation, these negotiations are the player's opportunity to put the screws to the loyal opposition via economic force. One simply has to be careful with what is traded away, since traded facilities do not pick up and move, they merely become property of the opposing colony right where they sit--even if they sit in the middle of your colony.

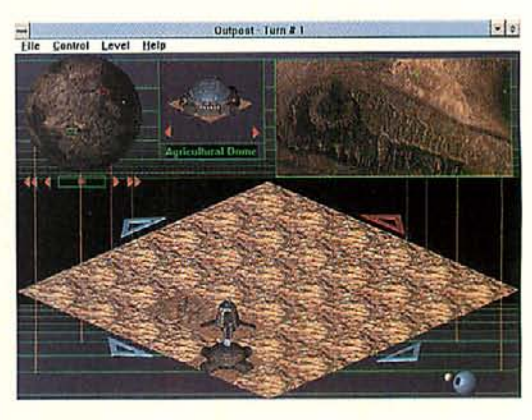
"Hal...Oh Hal?"

Though some of this may sound daunting, the program does provide assistance. A pseudo-AI personality helps to fulfill the player's duties and warn of impending disaster. There is also a never-ending supply of reports, from an overall status report for one's entire colony to individual updates from each and every facility under the player's control.

Also programmed into this game is a micro-management system that will allow one to assign mundane turn-to-turn tasks to the computer assistant while attending to more important details, such as the morale of the personnel or the creation of police units if one decides to ignore their needs. This ability to concentrate on new tasks instead of the same repetitious ones should free this title from the boredom-factor that crops up in other sim-type games.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory."

The graphic quality of *Outpost* is simply incredible, and the design team deserves full credit for pushing the envelope on the current technology. Considering the game will run comfortably on a 386/25 with four megabytes of RAM, the photo-quality animation sequences are stunning. The portions I have seen are equal to those seen on television shows that use computer graphics for special effects. Granted, the game is designed primarily for CD-ROM, so the DOS version will take 20 megabytes of hard drive space to do the same job a little slower and with less pizzazz, but even the CD-less among us will still enjoy a beautiful 640 X 480 playing field, with each tile and terrain square crafted in extreme detail.



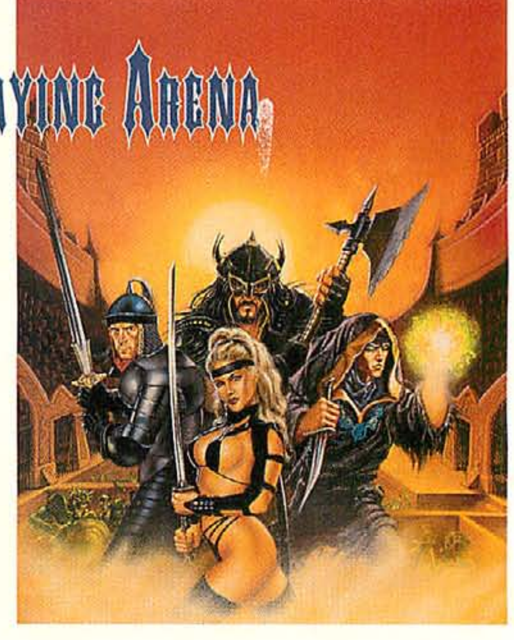
Jon Bock crafted most of these images using AutoDesk 3D, and the animation has been meshed seamlessly with gameplay to give players every chance to suspend disbelief and immerse themselves fully in the simulation. The decision to use a simple *Windows* interface is definitely a courageous choice when the trend this year in science fiction games has been to create extravagant and flashy interfaces, usually at the expense of gameplay. The game is scheduled for release in March of '94 in both CD and DOS formats with a Mac version likely to follow within a few months.

Dependent upon the success of *Outpost*, long-range plans include a series of expansion disks that will extend the game universe by developing the storyline and introducing new rules and features as plot devices. Disks may include an actual all-out war and first contact with an alien race. Even without these expansions, the game's large and accurate starmap contains hundreds of stars that change most of their planetary values with every game. Hopefully this dynamic map will keep the replay value high.

This game is sure to create quite a splash, and deservedly so. If interactive entertainment truly wishes to be taken as seriously as books or film, then I think this is definitely the kind of high ground to seize. In an economic climate where originality is considered a risk, and rehashing old ideas is not only seen as smart but is strongly preferred to the development of new projects, Sierra deserves full marks for taking a step outside their usual beaten track and supporting a new *Outpost*. This is one reviewer who hopes it will grow and prosper. CGW

Fresh Blood In The Role-Playing Arena

Politics, Peril and Power in Bethesda's *The Elder Scrolls, Volume 1: Arena*





by Johnny L. Wilson

The formula is deceptively simple. A Foozle (X) has entrapped an important personage (Y) in a situation (Z) from which Y is helpless to remove himself or herself. A heroine or hero (A) is recruited to either face X (the wicked wizard, corrupt king, demented demon, etc.) in a massive magical showdown which leads to bliss (B) for the kingdom, world, dimension, etc. ((X/A)+(Z-Y) = B) or use superior intelligence and magic to remove Y from the clutches of X ((A+(Z-Y))-X = B) and return the situation to the best of all possible worlds. Sometimes, the formula is expanded as magical artifacts (M) are added to the scenario: (((A+(M*x))+(Z-Y))-X = B) (where x represents the number of pieces of the artifact which the heroine/hero must recover and assemble in order to be able to accomplish the task).

The Elder Scrolls, Volume 1: Arena follows the last and most complex formula. The wicked wizard has entrapped the benevolent and erudite Emperor in a dimension in which time passes (and hence, the Emperor ages) very slowly relative to the game world. To further complicate matters, the wizard has taken on the appearance of the Emperor and no one would know about the imprisonment if it weren't for that wizard's apprentice. The wizard's apprentice is too Mickey Mouse (oops, wrong apprentice), that is, too inept to be able to rescue the Emperor by himself, so he recruits the player's character to accomplish what he cannot.

Normally, this would cause me to experience my first rebellious act of disbelief. I always want to know how the player's character got stuck in the story. I'm rarely satisfied with the standard means of a more powerful patron recruiting a first level player character to do his/her dirty work. Fortunately, V.J. Lakshman and Julian Lefay, the designers of *Arena*, are kindred spirits in this regard. The reason the player's character is chosen is because he/she is an offspring of one of four Imperial Guards, an elite group sworn to protect the king. The apprentice cannot recruit the Imperial Guards themselves, because their absence from the side of the faux-Emperor would alert the wizard that his plan had been betrayed. So, the apprentice appeals to the offspring of this elite crew in order that they, though inexperienced, can accomplish what their progenitors could not—the restoration of the Emperor.





Ah, did I mention an artifact? The artifact in *Arena* is a staff of power, the magical item used by the wizard to imprison the Emperor. Unfortunately for the wizard, he cannot destroy the staff after his nefarious deed because the destruction of the artifact would undo his spell and release the real Emperor. So, he does the next best thing. He divides the staff into eight pieces and hides them all over the known world. Naturally, the player's character has to collect and assemble all eight pieces ((A+(M*8)) in order to release the Emperor from his cosmic captivity (Z-Y) and reset the desired equilibrium (B) by exposing the wizard (X).

Sound easy? It's not. **Bethesda Softworks** has elected to create a huge world split into nine provinces. This means that there are nine cultures and habitats, complete with politics and weather. Want to see snow? Visit Skyrim, the Land of the Nords. Tired of human-looking humans? Try Elsweyr, home of the feline race known as the Kjajiit (sic) or Black Marsh, home of the reptilian Argonians. Add three kinds of elven races, a dwarven race and another band of humanoids, and the world gets fairly rich. There are desert environments, mountainous regions and swamps, and all function with realistic terrain and weather (snow piles up in drifts, puddles mirror buildings during the rain, etc.).

Further, characters adventuring in the worlds of *Arena* will discover that their way is aided or hindered on various occasions by groups with their own agendas and belief systems: Brotherhood of War, Order of the Gentle Hand, Order of the Red Rose, and more. Another nice touch is that, as characters wander the streets and alleys of cities within this world, they can pick up both useful information and strange red herrings from the citizens and denizens of these locales. If a rumor is valid it will not only recur,

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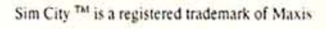
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it will become more specific as characters get closer to its source, whether that be a tavern, temple or inn. So, it pays to interact with characters, and the program is designed to unveil rumors, quests and helpful hints as if one was peeling an onion layer-by-layer. This is worthy.

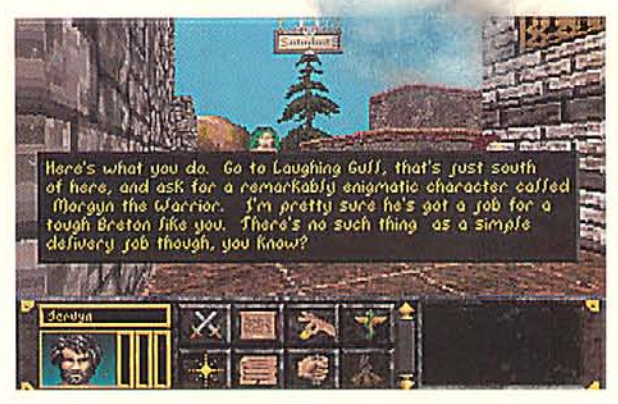
Also, as in most computer role-playing games, the player will need to complete mini-quests in order to have enough money, resources and experience to continue with and fulfill the main quest. In *Arena*, however, the designers have taken the "people and paper" role-playing model and tried to keep matters so that the computer feels like a human Dungeon Master who improvises according to the players' actions. So, although the standard formula for mini-quests (discovering a patron in a tavern who hires the player's character to perform a mercenary mission) is used, these quests are divided into Mundane and Noble Quests, randomly generated by the computer and set with appropriate risk/reward ratios). Also, there is a "political circumstances overlay" that will allow important quests to be inserted when certain conditions are met, and a percentage of probability that the party will hear valuable rumors which increases by 1% for every new experience level attained by the player's character.



Differential Equations

So, what makes *Arena* different? What's so hot about it? Frankly, I'm impressed because *Arena* is the first CRPG of recent vintage that is using state-of-the-art technology to present stunning (and fast!) first-person perspective visuals without forgetting the lessons of the past in terms of game design. I am impressed by the frame rate and scrolling of this game, even on a 386SX-33, and I am delighted with the special effects tricks used on the magic spells.

However, I'm even more thrilled that the design team has chosen to include question-based character generation as in *Ultima IV* (and that the questions seem more interesting and less judgmental than those in the classic game); multiple paths to solve problems as in *Wasteland* (there is always more than one way out of a situation); a risk/reward approach as in *Dragon Wars* (every dungeon has short cuts which are usually more dangerous, and safer paths which take longer); and something of a fame/notoriety rating as in *Darklands* (the game sets up PERK (perquisite) flags when the player's party is successful in certain actions and these allow the characters to get tips, pardons and quests, on occasion). I'm also excited that the game is realistic enough to realize that players are not always going to be successful and allows non-player characters (NPCs) to bail them out on occasion.



To be sure, the game features the obligatory icon-based command lines of most modern CRPGs. There are 11 icons on *Arena's* command line and they are fairly self-explanatory: Cast Spell, Steal, Use, Automap, Draw Weapon, etc. Within that command line, combat orders to other members of the party tend to be reduced to the simple "Protect PC at all costs" and "Follow me" variety, but that's been standard since *Ultima VI* revised the way combat AI was handled for other members of the player's party.

Yet, there are nifty new features within the game, as well. This is one of the few games where players can customize magic spells using a point and click magic system. The prototype seemed very versatile and the designers were attempting to link special effects to spell elements in such a way that even the player's custom spells would look impressive during combat. It is also slated to be one of the first CRPGs to support **Logitech**'s new *Cyberman*, the input device that gives vibratory feedback when characters bump into objects or happen to be struck by weapons. I haven't had a chance to experience the game with *Cyberman* at press time, but I hope to do so, soon.

I also like the fact that the game has no level limits. One doesn't have to attain a certain experience point level to move on, and characters can keep improving, *ad infinitum*. How do the designers intend to enforce play balance in such a system? Throughout the world, there are some really tough monsters, liches and vampires in particular. These monsters have their own agendas and can provide some pretty hefty balancing on their own. I haven't experienced one of these in the early stages of the game, but I'm looking forward to them when the game is finished.

Final Calculation

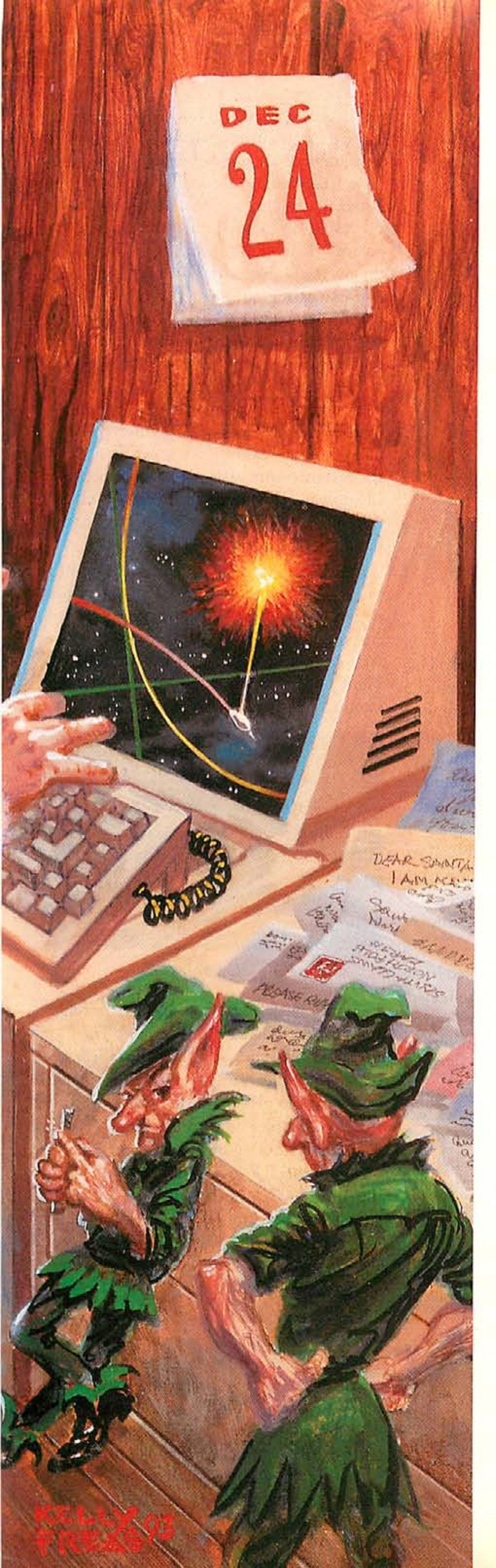
One of my great complaints with first-person point-of-view games has been that the designers tend to be looking for quick combat, fast scrolling and graphic pizzazz without remembering the need for story, character building and interaction. To me, the last year has seen a movement that makes many first-rank CRPGs seem more like action games on a video game machine than the rich, sophisticated role-playing experiences that first drew many of us into the world of computer games. Fortunately, *Arena* breaks the trend. It gets back to the roots of role-playing without losing the technological pyrotechnics of its competitors.

Arena isn't just another flash in the dungeon. When it pushes polygons about the screen, it's going somewhere, usually somewhere interesting. When it uses a special effect, it's creating an atmosphere, usually a fascinating one. If *Arena* captures the imagination of other gamers like it has captured mine, it may well be the game that establishes the new formula for CRPGs—'P' for proven ideas, '+ N' for new technology, '+ C' for creative innovation, '= S' for successful standard. Indeed, it is likely to mean (in terms of an older arena) that the Emptor (consumer) instead of the Emperor gives the "Thumbs Up!" **CGW**





FOR
EMPIRE



Computer Gaming World's

7th Annual Holiday Buying Guide

Santa Claus isn't the only computer game addict among our readership that waits until the last minute to spread his holiday cheer. To help him and his fellow gift-giving procrastinators, every year we try to round up as many of the newest games as we can lay our hands on so that we can provide our celebrative readers with a sleighful of screen shots and information prior to the holiday buying season. Of course, we aren't fortune tellers, so we can't guarantee which games will actually ship in time to appear in your holiday stash, but we've been careful to include only the games that are on final approach for their landings on software shelves. Also, since we haven't experienced the complete games, the mentions in this buying guide do not constitute a full recommendation. Our goal is simply to describe those games which we think will be of interest to our readers.

This year, the good news is that the software elves have been very busy, so we have lots to write about. The bad news is that we looked at many of the games in pre-release form, so we can't provide all the hard technical data that many of our readers would like for us to publish. Still, what we have tried to do is describe the games well enough that all the good little boys and girls can decide what software or hardware they want for the holidays. They can circle and highlight their favorites, and subtly drop this issue in the hands of their favorite Santa, Father Christmas, Hanukkah Harry, sugar daddy, parents, grandparents, spouse or significant other.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KELLY FREAS

ACTION



"Top this, Brothers!"

Archon Ultra: The original *Archon* was one of the early titles developed by a young, bold, visionary group of "software artists" that were going to "realize the potential of the personal computer." Among these Electronic Artists were Paul Reiche, Jon Freeman and Anne Westfall, whose brooding visages graced the record album-like packaging of the first "battle chess" game. Although the game was set on a chess-like board, and the players chose one of two sets of pieces, *Archon* was only loosely based on the chess paradigm. Players moved their pieces around a grid in an attempt to capture strategic "power points," while the board's "luminosity" cycled underfoot, constantly changing the balance of power. The use of magic made the contest even wilder: the "king" piece of both sides could summon elementals, shift the flow of time, resurrect pieces from the dead, and heal the wounded. When two creatures met on the field of battle, the play dropped into an action intensive battle of joysticks.



Archon Ultra

Archon Ultra takes all of the elements of *Archon* and the sequel, *Archon II*, and updates them with current graphics and sound. The game play hasn't change all that much, though creatures now have extra combat powers, and the dynamics of the "luminosity" cycle have been tweaked. Graphically, the creatures have refined animated movements, and there are a variety of 3-D battlefields with terrain objects to add variety to the combat stew. Even after 10 years, *Archon's* blend of action and strategy is fun and unique, and should please the joystick-bangers among the new generation of gamers. Strategic Simulations, Inc., IBM ($49.95).

Doom: If action gamers were knocked back on their heels by *Wolfenstein 3-D*, then they'd better pad their prominent posterior protrusions before booting *Doom.* "Visceral" was a word thrown around in discussions of *Wolf 3-D*, but *Doom* will redefine the term in the gaming lexicon, and "gratuitous" comes nowhere near the description of *Doom's* violent excesses. The player (or players, through the intended network and modem options) take the role of a space marine in a brutal and bloody battle with The Ultimate Evil, fighting level by level, down through the stories of a space station in search of Evil's wellspring. The graphics are *superb*, with stunning lighting effects and art that could only come from dark and demented minds. The floor plans of the levels, no longer limited to the rigid angularity of *Wolf 3D*, are richly intricate, and the overhead map utility will be the gamer's constant cartographic companion. The depth of the game play has not improved much over *Wolf 3D*, though there are buttons and levers that one can push and pull to uncover secret passageways and weapon caches. Id may have been slightly optimistic when they said *Doom* would play well on a 386SX; gamers will most likely need a 486 to get the experience that the designers intend. But what an experience! Id Software, IBM ($40.00, Episode 1 is shareware and available for the cost of shipping and handling by calling 1-800-Id-Games).



Doom

Dracula: Like something out of Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, gamers may find **Psygnosis'** *Dracula* stuffed in their stockings. Donning the garb of a vampire-killer, the player takes the role of Jonathan Harker and sets out to destroy the infamous Count. The macabre world of *Dracula* is a

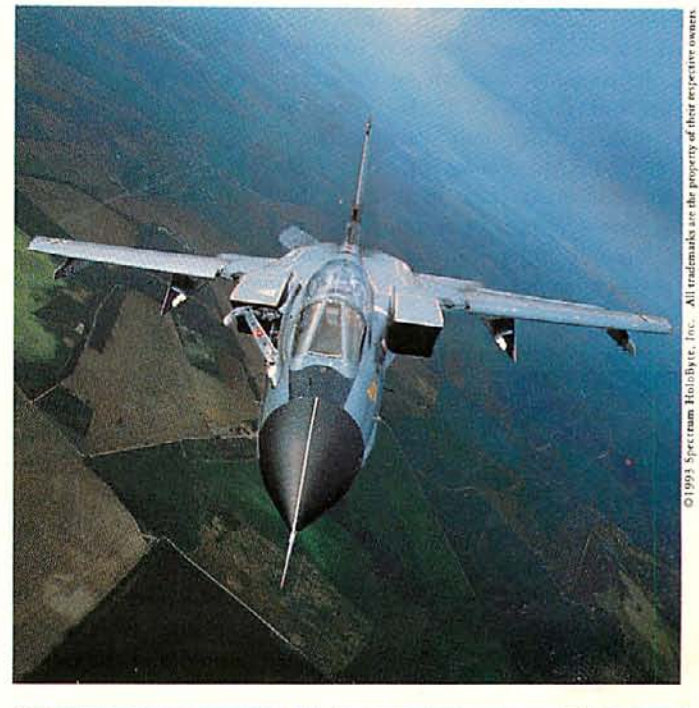


Dracula

free-scrolling, 3D environment strongly reminiscent of Id's *Wolfenstein 3D*. There are three stages to the game, and the object is to destroy a certain number of monster-generating coffins to proceed to the next stage. The player scrambles around a tedious maze of corridors gathering innumerable keys to unlock innumerable locked doors, while hoarding bullets, food and holy wafers to keep supplied. The game play, the graphics, and "me-too" game engine are—like Keanu Reeves' acting in the Copola film—uninspired. Psygnosis, IBM ($59.95).

Earth Invasion: Raise shields and arm weapons, *Windows* gamers. It's time to prepare for an *Earth Invasion*! Offering photo-realistic True-Color graphics (plus standard 16- and 256-color VGA graphics), full MIDI sound support, fast 3D scrolling, smooth animation, five difficulty levels, and over 30 levels of play, *Earth Invasion* gives the player three complete games in what are the most

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advanced action games available for windows. Earth Orbit Mission is reminiscent of *Galaxian*, Ground Defense Mission offers *Defender*-style action, while Deep Space Mission takes off *a la Wing Commander*. Requirements, however, are a touch on the heavy side, demanding a 386/SX 25MHz system or better (though it definitely plays best on a 486), 4MB RAM, *Windows 3.1* and *DOS 5.0*. An accelerated video card, preferably offering True-Color, is best, though not required. Sounds and music are exceptional with a 16-bit sound card and MIDI; 3D graphics rendered in *Autodesk 3D Studio* visually steal the show. 3DI Productions, Inc., IBM with Windows ($39.95).


Earth Invasion

Firefall Arcade: In the style of classic, fast-paced video games comes *Firefall Arcade* for the Macintosh. The choice is a simple one in this game of skill and agility—kill or be killed. As the player tries to make his or her way through nine, heart-pounding levels of excitement, ferocious fireworms, slinky sliders, and the perpetual "death star" all stand in the way of success. Fortunately, triads, heat seekers, cannons, and V12s are at the player's disposal. Every bit of firepower will be needed to survive. Employing 3-D animated effects and a cool soundtrack, *Firefall Arcade* serves up a visual and audible treat. However, it will test one's mettle—only serious trigger trippers need apply. Inline Software, Macintosh ($49.95).

Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja: Ah, to return to our ancient past when an axe took care of our enemies and a good knock on the noggin got you a date. If you're pining for the prehistoric in the Fred and Barney vein, this captivating game will have you beating your chest and whooping with delight. In one- or two-player mode, the object is to hurl axes, tomahawks, fireballs and stone wheels at your enemies while picking up valuable nuggets like food and bonus points. If Joe or Mac down the chili sauce or eat a hot pepper, they'll cook any barbarian in their path. Enemies include pteranodons, electrified flying fish, poisonous seed-spitting plants, and a giant dinosaur or other ill-tempered meanie which must be dealt with on each level to win the fur-clad babes and move on. From the "stone wheel" packaging to the comical, attractive graphics and the upbeat jungle music, this game is an entertaining delight sure to liven things up in Bedrock or wherever men still eat meat. New World Computing, IBM ($29.95).



Joe & Mac Caveman Ninja

Mad Dog McCree: In the tradition of coin-op games with laser guns and video villains, American Laser Games has released *Mad Dog McCree*. Players take on the role of a no-name stranger (*a la* Clint Eastwood's vintage character) who comes in to rid a western town of the tyranny of the title villain, McCree himself. To do so, the game shuttles the player through first-person gunfight after first-person gunfight. The good news is that the scenes are reasonably well-acted and have enough randomness that one cannot merely memorize every sequence and move quickly through the game. Some of the stunts are as good as those we've seen at Universal Studio's stunt show. The bad news is that it is a relatively short game by computer game standards (though perhaps not by multimedia standards) and the action may not be paced fast enough for the most jaded twitch and flex fans. On the IBM, it may well be the action game "for the rest of us" since the mouse makes a formidable pistol and the pace seemed just challenging enough. Unfortunately, the Genesis and 3DO controllers seem sluggish in comparison and reduced the enjoyment of the overall experience. American Laser Games, IBM with CD-ROM, SegaCD and 3DO ($59.95, $54.95, $59.95).



Mad Dog McCree

Metal & Lace: Anime fans, as predominantly male as action-oriented gamers, should appreciate some of the beautiful round-eyed females who are draped in seductive poses to provide the ambiance for this game. The game itself, however, offers merely some new spin on one of computer gamedom's oldest ideas: man-to-man or machine-to-machine combat *a la Karateka, Street Fighter, Bad Dudes, Budokan, Tongue of the Fat Man* and a cast of thousands. The spin is that there is something of a role-playing wrap around the arcade sequences (interaction in a sleazy bar, complete with bimbos and a place to pick up new weapons) and that the combatants are not men. Indeed, these are female 'mechs (Robo-Babes in the game's fiction) out of another Japanime tradition—the robotic warrior sagas. Megatech, IBM ($49.95).

Rebel Assault: May the Force, and a CD-ROM, be with the *Star Wars* fan this holiday season. In this game of hot n' heavy joystick action, LucasArts uses actual music and digitized footage from the *Star Wars* films and 3-D rendered graphics to put on one of the hottest sight-sound shows to be seen from a CD-ROM game. The player will don a Rebel flight suit and blast his or her way through 15 different action-oriented sequences: navigating the hairy canyons of Beggar's Canyon, weaving through an asteroid field with TIE fighters in pursuit, making a suicide attack on a Star Destroyer, and blasting through the Stormtrooper-infested hallways of a Rebel base, among others. In terms of game play, it is very simplistic and is reminiscent of early laser disk coin-ops—but what a show! LucasArts, IBM with CD-ROM ($69.95).



Rebel Assault

Shadowcaster: As described in *CGW* #111, *Shadowcaster*'s 3-D "in-your-face" graphics make this game a "must play" for every hack and slasher. Player characters get to morph into six different creatures (with differing attacks and strengths) in order to fight some of the most fascinating monsters ever to grace

computer screens. When the art from Raven Software *(The Black Crypt)* is combined with the game engine from Id (*Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom*) and the soundtrack from Origin, the result is extra special. In addition, gamers who opt to purchase Logitech's *CyberMan* (see the hardware section of this buying guide) will have an extra-special sense of being there since the input device vibrates in the gamer's hand every time the enemies score a hit. Origin Systems, Inc., IBM ($79.95).



Shadowcaster

Spectre VR: Old timers might remember the classic arcade games in the tradition of *Battle Tank* and *Asteroids*. Now, these crude wire-frames that evolved into the polished prize of *Spectre* have undergone yet another evolution. This wild, polygon-filled scroller shoot-'em-up is just right for multi-player good times on IBM and Macintosh networks, as well as solitaire fun on a single computer. In this sequel product, new enemies such as slicers and smart acid pools will trouble players, but improved weaponry such as spinners, proximity mines and pulse bursts provide sufficient antidotes. Network players will be happy to hear that up to 8 players can be accommodated in over a dozen enhanced network scenarios. Best of all, there is even a scenario editor called the VRchitect. Now you can be the master of all you survey and create levels of action that no computer could ever dream up. Velocity Development, IBM and Macintosh ($59.95).

Speed Racer in the Challenge of Racer X: Imagine *Outrun* with a plot. *Speed Racer* uses the familiar characters of the popular animated series (a first experience with anime for many gamers), voice clips, and some plot devices from the television series to enhance what would otherwise be just another driving game. The mechanics have the feel of many a coin-op racing game, but there are additional features to be added to Speed Racer's Mach 5 racer, and scenarios built into each race, just like in the cartoon. For example, gamers accelerating through the Valley of Destruction have to find a particular opponent and push the bad guy's car into a spinout. This action will cause a pineapple (with typical hidden jewel) to fly out of the car so that the police can arrest the international jewel smuggler/race driver. Those looking for a simulation will be tremendously disappointed. Those looking for a clever action game with a lot of nostalgic twists simply won't be able to resist. Accolade, IBM ($59.95).

The Geekwad Games of the Galaxy: The evil Cybergeek has imprisoned King Wacky in a jar of jalapeno jelly, and only a geekwad can save him. Fortunately, if you buy this package, you are just the Geekwad Tsunami is looking for. Talk to the space spoofs on the Bridge to learn how to beat Cybergeek at five arcade games and free your pickled ruler. Carl Raygun introduces you to Beefender, where flying cattle of the Bovine Liberation Organization (BLO) must be shot down in two-dimensional space. Isaac Claponclapov teaches tactics for Grogger, a tricky dodge and hop game set in a galactic carhop. A Yoda look-alike offers a shareware-style shooting game where flipping quarters at pesky solicitors makes them go away. In another game, Earth



Speed Racer

Last!, intergalactic garbage such as cigarette butts and nauseous effluent must be "bagged" to score points. Finally, Captain Major Buzz Armstrong with his six-pack support system monitors Phlegmings, the best take-off in this package. Tiny walking Phlegmings must be whacked by your spaceman with a golf club and a healthy swing, lest they gum up his spacesuit. Flicking Phlegmings can be phun, but overall *Geekwad* is a cute collection of shareware-quality games for the unabashedly imbecilic. Tsunami, IBM ($34.95).

ADVENTURE



Xmas trees delivered anywhere . . . "Oops!"

Companions of Xanth: As previewed in our July issue (*CGW* #108), this graphic adventure breaks new ground for Legend Entertainment. It is their first release using a parserless interface (there is a parser, but it is nearly transparent) and it is a very funny game, based on an interesting literary license. When Piers Anthony wrote *A Spell for Chameleon*, the first Xanth novel, he certainly couldn't have expected the number of forthcoming titles it would generate. Even less would he have expected that the competition described in one of those Xanth novels would appear as a separate computer game. Based on the novel *Demons Don't Dream*, *Companions of Xanth* offers some traditional adventure game puzzles, but it also has some that cannot be solved without the help of the said "companions," characters familiar from the Xanth books themselves. Legend Entertainment, IBM ($59.95).

Dracula Unleashed: When the Count says

he wants to neck, young damsels will end up with more than a hickey. They will, in fact, find the experience very draining. In the wake of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, and in preparation for Halloween, Viacom New Media (formerly ICOM Simulations) has released *Dracula Unleashed*, the latest and greatest of their CD-ROM titles. Based upon the game engine employed in *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective*, *Dracula Unleashed* features improved audio and video, and, for those with appropriate graphic cards, a re"vamp"ed SVGA interface. The result of these improvements can be readily seen and heard from the moment the story begins to unfold. Video clips exhibit remarkable clarity, smooth flow and precise lip sync. Acting is professional and, thankfully, believable, audio descriptions spice up the atmosphere, and on-line assistance provided by ol' Van Helsing himself (audio only) helps familiarize the player with the gaming system and available options. Gamers with a taste for the macabre will find their cravings nurtured and their fears unleashed in this interactive horror movie. Viacom New Media, IBM with CD-ROM ($69.95).

Fables & Fiends: The Hand of Fate: In this sequel to *The Legend of Kyrandia*, the first title in the *Fables & Fiends* series, attention turns



Companions of Xanth

to Zanthia, the femme fatale of Kyrandia and most impulsive of the mystics. As prominent figure in this story, Zanthia must save Kyrandia from a strange curse placed upon the land. It seems that Kyrandia is slowly disappearing, one tree, rock, and blade of grass at a time. In addition to a more involved story and tougher puzzles than faced by Brandon in the original *Kyrandia*, romance blooms forcing Zanthia to deal with the inept affections of her suitor, Marko. One can expect this visit to Kyrandia to offer significantly more challenge and play time than its predecessor. As expected, gorgeous graphics, atmospheric music and rib-tickling humor abound. Technological improvements provide more accurate scaling and more realistic lighting in this enchanting game experience from one of the leading developers of animated adventures. Westwood Studios/Virgin Interactive Entertainment, IBM and IBM with CD-ROM ($62.99).

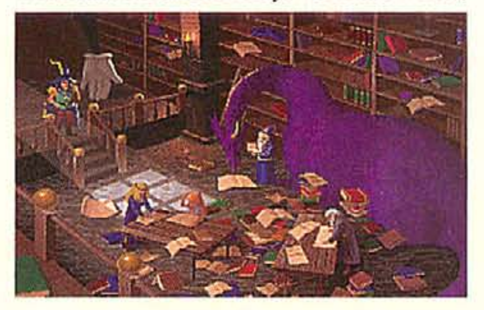
Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Fathers: This gaming exercise in terror is an adventure game that builds on myth, symbolism and superstition in order to pull the gamer into a dark and dramatic world. Gabriel Knight is a writer who investigates a series of bizarre murders (for the purpose of writing a novel) and discovers that there is more to both the crime and himself than he had previously considered. The dark palette of the artwork is remi-



Dracula Unleashed

niscent of a graphic novel that couldn't be approved by the Comics Code and is outstanding in setting the mood. The sound effects and music add to the intensity of the playing experience, and the conversations are richer than we can ever remember having experienced in one of Sierra's graphic adventures. Sierra On-Line, Inc., IBM ($69.95).

Goblins 3: Continuing with the outrageously charming wit and cartoonish animated antics that made the first two *Goblins* titles so popular, *Goblins 3* is destined to amuse, entertain and puzzle all who step into the crazy world concocted by the French designers at Coktel. In this particular branch of the Goblins story, the unlikely hero is Blount, a journalist by trade and an adventurer by heart. Having always wanted to visit faraway lands, this headstrong writer and hard-headed goblin sets out for Foliandre Mountain in search of the Jewel of the World,



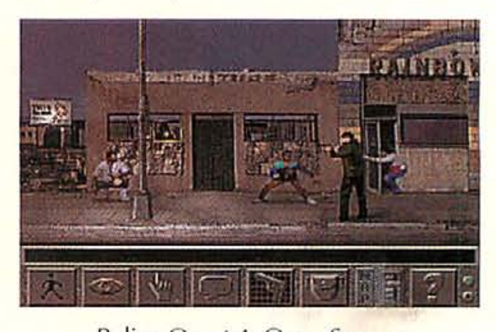
Fables & Fiends: The Hand of Fate



Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father

a famous artifact thought to bestow special pleasures to the individual who will take it to his people. Watch Blount change from a weakling to a true hero as he shrinks, grows to giant size, sprouts wings and transforms into a werewolf. Bizarre fun guaranteed for the puzzle lover. Sierra On-Line, Inc./Coktel Vision, IBM ($39.95).

Plumbers Don't Wear Ties: Billed as an interactive romantic comedy and coming from a new multimedia company named United Pixtures, we thought that an interactive soap opera had finally hit the SVGA screen. Instead, the minimally interactive story is more like a radio play with digitized pictures. To be sure, some of the digitized pictures are of rather prurient interest, but the pacing of the digitized speech is amateurish and the interaction is much too limited. One has more of a feeling of playing a full-color version of television's National Driving Test with the verb "Dating" substituted for "Driving," rather than making a real difference in the story. United Pixtures, IBM with CD-ROM ($23.95).



Police Quest 4: Open Season

Police Quest 4: Open Season: Former L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates played a leading role in designing this latest offering in the *Police Quest* series. Beginning with the brutal murder of one of L.A.'s finest, the player dons the badge of a detective on a bizarre murder case. Life as an L.A.P.D. homicide detective is no picnic: as if the bad guys weren't tough enough, the player must deal with the press, and must follow strict police procedures at all times. From the manual that reads like "the book" that officers must go by when enforc-



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and go on to hit the enemy in his own backyard. Fail and find the bad guys breathing down your neck.

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ing the law, through mandatory weapon qualifications, to visiting actual police "hang outs," and dealing with the citizens and scum of L.A., one finds a remarkable degree of work-a-day police realism as a result of Gates' contributions. Set in a new, enhanced game engine with marvelous digitized backgrounds, this game may be more appealing than True Crime television. Let's just be careful out there.... Sierra, IBM and IBM with CD-ROM ($69.95 floppy; $79.95 CD-ROM).

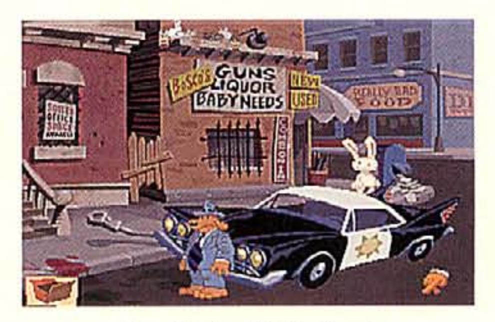
Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness: Fans of Lori and Corey Cole's award-winning *Quest for Glory* series will be pleased to know that *Shadows of Darkness*, their fourth *Quest for Glory* game, will soon be out on store shelves. This latest title, an unusual combination of the animated adventure and role-playing genres, takes gamers to a mythical Transylvanian valley on a quest to rid the land of evil and face the Dark One himself. Prior to that encounter, however, players will have to survive a realm filled with the undead, wraiths, vampires and grotesque monsters



Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness

(including a rabbit reminiscent of the furry little beast from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*). In the role of either a fighter, magic user or thief, the player must fight, conjure or steal their way to success. *Shadows of Darkness* features an improved icon bar with more available options, an upgraded arcade combat system, and the ability to import one's hero from previous games or begin anew. Three skill levels allow gamers to adjust play to their liking in this adventure designed to provide a unique blend of dark suspense and light humor. Audio and graphics are traditional Sierra quality, employing a style that lends interesting substance to this supernatural game world. *Quest for Glory IV: Shadows of Darkness* looks to be another award winner. Sierra, IBM ($69.95).

Return to Zork: As previewed in *CGW* #112, the familiar environs of the Great Underground Empire have been transported to a world of live-action video. The game sports an innovative pop-up interface and some



Sam & Max Hit the Road

tough, but often illogical puzzles. The game is divided into three different sections, but the largest and most important one is the Great Undergound Empire itself. Players, as the unnamed adventurer(ess), must discover the reason behind the disappearance of the populace of West Shanbar. Both the floppy disk version of the game and the CD version sport marvelous images and special effects (particularly when played with the *Reel Magic* board from **Sigma Design**), but the CD really shines with an excellent original score performed by an actual, rather than synthesized, orchestra. Activision, IBM, IBM with CD-ROM ($79.95).

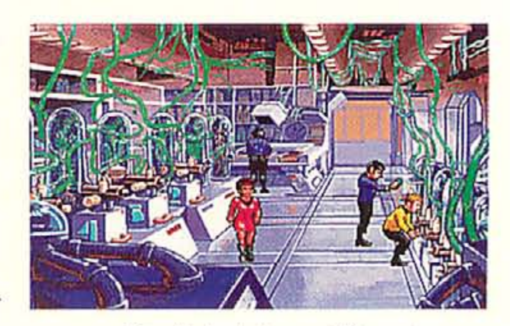
Sam & Max Hit the Road: LucasArts had to change their philosophy about interfaces in order to make this game work. Sam & Max are two talking animal detectives in the weird and wonderful world of comic artist Steve Purcell. Purcell is the artist that LucasArts taps most often when they need some kind of odd physical comedy, but his comic books are also noted for a sardonic wit extraordinaire. Since part of the fun of the comics is being surprised by the witticism of Sam & Max the talking dog and rabbit, the designers opted not to use pull-down menus of typed out conversational gambits. Instead, players choose the general attitude that Sam and Max will show in a conversation and the wise remarks tumble out faster than BBs from an overturned carton. In addition to presenting the largest characters placed on-screen in a LucasArts graphic adventure, the game features a pop-up interface so that the entire screen is used for animation. In graphic adventure tradition, Sam & Max are directed



Simon the Sorcerer

from location to location solving puzzles as they go, but these are locations right out of our childhood memories. Anyone who has ever read the enticing billboards for tourist traps will be able to identify with such exotic attractions as the combination alligator farm and miniature golf course, or the world's largest ball of twine. To top off the humor, the game features some zany (optional) arcade sequences for the eye-hand adept. LucasArts Entertainment, IBM ($59.95).

Simon the Sorcerer: Start with a spellbook and a large cauldron filled with swamp water. Mix in a dash of *Altered Destiny*; add a smidgen of *Legend of Kyrandia*. Then, blend in a large portion of *The Secret of Monkey Island* topped off with a hint of *Waxworks* and mix well. The result? *Simon the Sorcerer*, a wacky, tongue in cheek quest about an adolescent out to save a magical dimension from an evil wizard. With humor most closely resembling that of LucasArts' *Monkey Island*, *Simon the Sorcerer* features a rich world of tasty puzzles



Star Trek: Judgment Rites

designed to test the wits of the most astute adventurer while keeping the humor level turned up to maximum. Attractive graphics, lifelike animation and a catchy soundtrack draw the player into this tale of a boy and his dog as they cross dimensions to meet beer-swilling trolls, werefrogs, a company starved swampling, and more. Playing *Simon the Sorcerer* is guaranteed to bring a touch of joy to the holidays. Activision, IBM ($49.95).

Star Trek: Judgment Rites: Once again it's time to boldly go where no one has gone before. Interplay's sequel to their first *Star Trek* adventure, *Judgment Rites*, is like its predecessor, with eight episodes in the tradition of the classic television series. Each episode consists of a specific mission requiring the usual dose of puzzle-solving in order to progress. Further, all eight episodes are part of one overarching plot which becomes increasingly apparent as the player reaches the game's conclusion. Space combat also plays an important role in *Judgment Rites*, as it did before. Fortunately, though, those "enterprising" folks at Interplay have increased

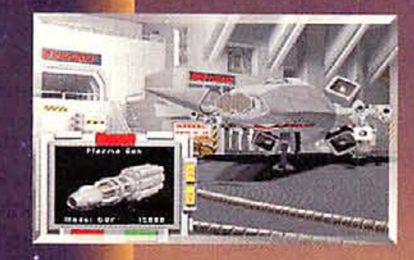
WING COMMANDER

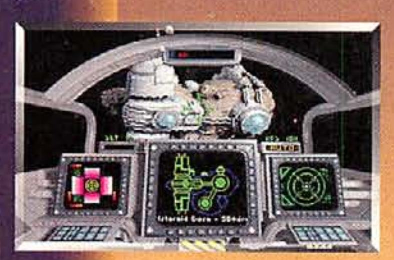
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playability by allowing gamers to select a combat difficulty level equal to their space fighting prowess and interest: Federation Cadet, Cadet Graduate, or Seasoned Veteran. In addition to the elements that made *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary* so entertaining, are the inclusion of new, detailed artwork, fresh musical scores, more sound effects from the original series and improved game interaction through an enhanced icon interface. Those who enjoyed their initial "trek" with Interplay will certainly find *Judgment Rites* a nostalgic and entertaining experience, especially so with the digitized voices of the original cast members—Kirk, Spock, Bones, Uhura, Sulu, Chekhov and Scotty. Romulan Warbirds, Klingon Battle Cruisers and Elasi Pirates beware! Interplay Productions, Inc., IBM ($59.95).

The Beverly Hillbillies: "Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named Jed, a poor mountaineer barely kept his family fed. And then one day he was shootin' at some food..." and Capstone stepped into licensing crude. Spoils, that is. Properties, movie rights. Capstone has added yet another license to their stable with the computer rights to Twentieth Century Fox's *The Beverly Hillbillies*. In this new action adventure based upon the movie of the same name (featuring the whole Clampett clan of Jed, Elly May, Jethro and Granny), the player assumes the role of ol' Uncle Jed himself. From Bugtussle to Beverly Hills, Jed must take his family from scimmin'



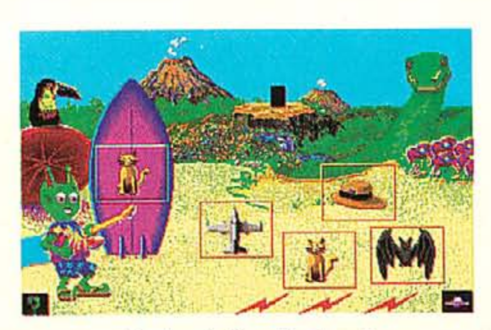
The Beverly Hillbillies

oil in the nearby swamp to swimmin' in the cement pond, collecting a heapin' helpin' of inventory items along the way. Incorporating a very simplistic graphic interface, modest VGA graphics, a tolerably passable audio soundtrack and predominantly banal puzzles, *The Beverly Hillbillies* is definitely a light duty action/adventure romp. Though the neophyte or occasional adventurer may find it his jug of moonshine, serious adventurers should look elsewhere for their requisite dose of questing entertainment. Capstone, IBM ($34.95).

CHILDRENS SOFTWARE


"Hit him again, Santa — he's still wigglin'!"

Electronic Reading Land: The first in D.C. True's early learning products series, *The Jimi Learning Experience, Electronic Reading Land* teaches children 3 to 7 years old how to read. Hosted by Jimi, a fully animated learning guide and partner, this edutainment program incorporates digitized speech (over 500 words), animated graphics, music by Jimi Hendricks and a host of activities designed to make the process of learning to read a fun and exciting experience. Emphasis is placed upon building phonic skills, nurturing reading independence, and developing letter sound correspondence and phonemic awareness. While not up to Sierra's titles in graphic splendor, *Electronic Reading Land* is still graphically appealing, especially to its target audience. Audio and visual feedback to the learner is effective, emphasizing pronunciation and spelling skills. An on-line Parents and Teachers Guide completes the package, providing direction and assistance to those directing the learning process. In all, *Electronic Reading Land* looks like a fun way to get early readers hooked on phonics. D.C. True, Ltd., IBM ($49.95).


Electronic Reading Land

Fatty Bear Fun Pack: There is no better mediator between an aspiring youngster and a computer than Fatty Bear. This cherubic teddy talks in a compelling cartoon whisper that kids can't help but listen to. In this


Fatty Bear Fun Pack

package, he's playing games with the 3-8 year old set and interacting in courteous, patient and amusing ways at all times. The games include Reversi, Tangrams, Go Fish, Lines & Boxes, and a Paint Set that will have your child experimenting with colors for endless hours. Fatty Bear has always delivered top entertainment value for the dollar, and this little game pack is no exception. Humongous Entertainment, IBM, IBM with CD-ROM, Macintosh and 3DO ($44.95).

Kid Keys: New from Davidson & Associates is *Kid Keys*, the "Magical Typing Tutor" that brings the keyboard to life. Unlike many other typing tutorials, *Kid Keys* was specifically designed with children in mind, employing large, easy to read type and stressing accuracy over speed. Three different activities assist kids to progress from learning key posi-


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tions to typing smoothly and accurately. Using high resolution VGA graphics, digitized speech and sound effects, "Helping Hands" to show exact finger placement, and entertaining animations, *Kid Keys* encourages children to learn a skill that will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Davidson & Associates, IBM ($49.95).

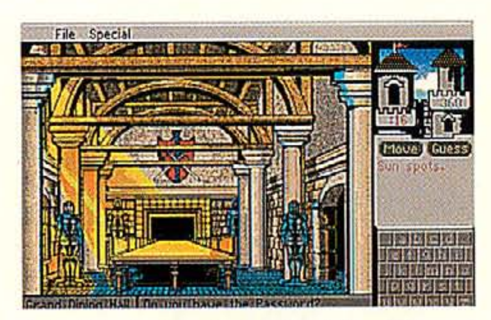
Lenny's MusicToons: Children young and old alike will be making music and having a blast with this new musical software package from Paramount. Designed to inspire musical expression, *Lenny's MusicToons* features six musical playgrounds filled with animated



Mathology

cartoon characters that provide gaggles of on-screen antics. All the action begins in Lenny's fun room where almost every item provides some interactive entertainment. Birds fly, fish swim, and Lenny eats sweets while he watches PTV (Penguin TV). Definitely a "kideriffic" piece of software. Paramount Interactive, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($59.95).

Mathology: It's 500 B.C. and the gods are not smiling. The evil god Apathy and his minions have led the world into the "Age of Darkness." Now, only a carefully chosen champion can help Zeus thwart the plans of Apathy by learning the "Numbers of Light" and finding the "Gems of Wisdom" necessary to bring this evil age to an end. The player as "chosen one" must do his or her part to defeat Apathy in this educational math-oriented action-adventure set in ancient Greece. Unfortunately, after releasing a truly brilliant social studies title in *The Lost Tribe*, Lawrence's *Mathology* leaves much to be desired. Though the concept of honing math skills in this action style gaming environment does have merit, a clumsy interface and only mediocre presentation make this title's value questionable. Though development of critical thinking and mathematical understanding are stressed, they are so obscured by the trappings that one questions the learning benefit to be gained. As it stands, with other quality programs available to encourage youngsters in developing their math skills, picking up a



Mind Castle: The Spell of the Word Wizard

copy of *Mathology* just doesn't add up. Lawrence Productions, Inc., IBM ($49.95).

Mind Castle: The Spell of the Word Wizard: Lawrence Productions have found a more amusing way to take a vocabulary test and, like a swarm of birds, kids will [gaggle] [fly] [flock] to play it. When one stumbles upon a demented wizard during the game's prologue, it is a quick matter to be turned into a frog and sent on a two hour excursion into proper vocabulary through the five levels of play offered in this game. Each puzzle within the castle takes a pre-set number of minutes and deducts them from the two hour "clock," but since the game is not played in real time, youngsters ages eight and up can always consult a dictionary or their parents for grammatical guidance. While the game is not particularly ingenious in story or presentation, it is solid stuff that young wordmongers may *flock* to. Lawrence Productions, IBM and Macintosh ($59.95).

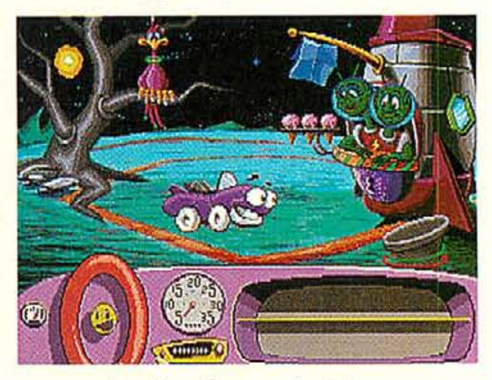
Peter Pan: A Story Painting Adventure: Perhaps the most distinctive in the line of EA*Kids games, *Peter Pan: A Story Painting Adventure* is a cross between a graphics adventure and exploratory software. The cute little paintbox at the bottom of the screen serves as



Peter Pan: A Story Painting Adventure

both an iconic command line interface and help screen. As Peter progresses through the world in a series of beautifully animated sequences, he occasionally runs into problems. Children choose from the animated icons in the paint box to solve puzzles and help Peter out of his difficulties. Game play is simple, the concept is well-executed, the graphics are better drawn (by experienced Hungarian animators) than many animated cartoons, and the overall effect is a delight. Electronic Arts, IBM, IBM with CD-ROM, Macintosh, Macintosh with CD-ROM, 3DO ($49.95).

Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon: With even more delightful sounds and animation sequences than its successful predecessor, *Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon* is edutainment with an accent on entertainment. It seems Putt-Putt was visiting the fireworks factory when he reenacted an old line from *The Honeymooners* ("To the moon, Alice!") because the wrong lever is pulled at the wrong time. It's the right time for gamers, though, because this game teaches cooperation (via a lively animated lunar rover) and introduces a new crop of animated supporting characters that will run



Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon

through the entire product line. Young children will learn about the solar system and improve their math skills while engrossed in the graphic adventure aspects of this puzzle-solving and exploration game. Humongous Entertainment, IBM, IBM with CD-ROM, Macintosh, 3DO ($54.95).

The New Kid on the Block: A collection of interactive poems, *The New Kid on the Block* brings poetry alive for children ages 6 to 12. Clicking on the various words and phrases results in on-screen antics that coincide with the selected word. Clicking on "liver" causes an on-screen youngster to turn a yucky purple. Clicking on the word "porcupine" causes a group of porcupines to "fling" their needles. Seventeen poems by Jack Prelutsky are featured in this wacky and occasionally wicked animated poetry book. Children can choose to read the poems themselves or have them read aloud. A "Let Me Play" mode allows kids to explore language on a word-by-word basis. Included poems are "My Dog, He is an Ugly Dog" and "Forty Performing Bananas." Broderbund Software, Inc., IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($39.95).

The Selfish Giant: Following Shelley Duvall's *Its a Bird's Life*, Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* arrives as Sanctuary Woods' second

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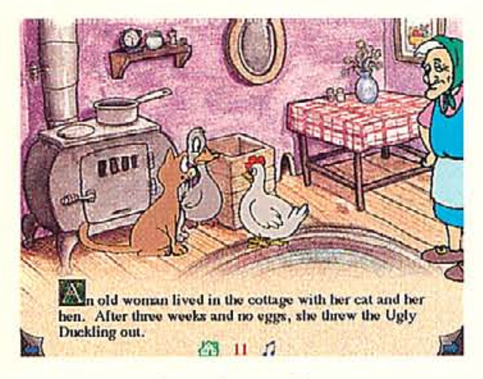
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title in their I-tales collection of interactive storybooks. Created for children 3 years old and up, *The Selfish Giant* combines the well-known fairy tale with the benefits of multimedia—colorful graphics, animation, story narration, fun songs and games. An interactive coloring book, a castle builder, and a face creation activity supplement the story. Sanctuary Woods, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($39.95).

The Tortoise And The Hare: It's an age-old tale, but it's as fresh as ever in the loving hands of Broderbund's Living Books group. Simon the Crow tells Aesop's tale of the value of hard, steady work over procrastination and hurriedness. The program has two modes: one that reads the book to the child, and one that lets the child explore the dozens of animations sprinkled around each page of the story. The animation and sound effects are marvelous, and the young reader will find a ton of giggles in all of the point-and-click silliness. Besides encouraging kids to read, the books will help develop written word-to-spoken word associations, as kids can click on individual words in the story to hear them read aloud. For readers ages 3-8. Broderbund, IBM and Mac with CD-ROM ($39.95).



The Ugly Duckling

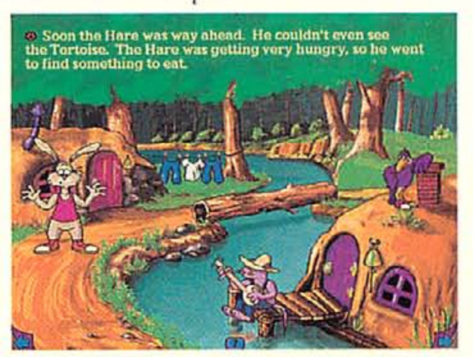
The Ugly Duckling: Hans Christian Anderson's "The Ugly Duckling" has been a child-pleaser for many generations. Now, children can enjoy Shannon Gilligan's beautifully animated computer adaptation. Packaged with a cute stuffed duck, *The Ugly Duckling* offers children hours of entertainment while helping them develop their reading skills. In addition to over 500 animations and sounds, three songs have been provided for sing-along purposes. From the Ugly Duckling itself to marching ants to flying books and slithering sea monsters, *The Ugly Duckling* is all it's "quacked" up to be and a fine first effort for this young company. Morgan Interactive, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($49.95).



Victor Vector & Yondo: The Last Dinosaur Egg

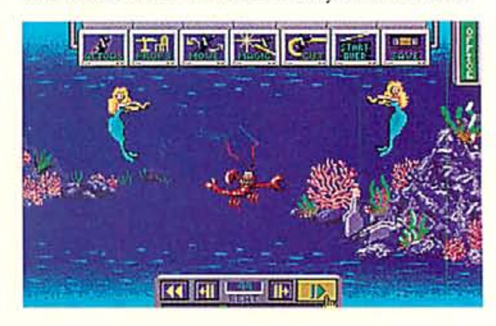
Victor Vector & Yondo: The Last Dinosaur Egg: The second installment in the *Victor Vector & Yondo* series of I-ventures, *The Last Dinosaur Egg* continues the interactive comic book adventures of our hero Victor Vector and his faithful pooch Yondo. As field agents of The Museum of Fantastic Phenomena, this digital duo is given the task of traveling through time in search of ancient, eerie artifacts. The current assignment: save the dinosaurs from extinction by visiting the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous eras, and retrieving the last dinosaur egg. There are, however, those who wish to stop these heros from acheiving their goals. In addition to dealing with enormous, deadly creatures of the past, Victor & Yondo must also escape the clutches of arch-rival RAM Axis. Will the villain prevail? Will the last dinosaur egg be saved? Will Victor meet the gorgeous Delta Mode, a beautiful female time traveler? Tune in next week. Sanctuary Woods, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($39.95).

Victor Vector & Yondo: The Hypnotic Harp: *The Hypnotic Harp* is Sanctuary Woods' third I-venture in the *Victor Vector & Yondo* series, and it offers yet more interactive comic book action as Victor and Yondo head back to the exciting days of Nero's Rome. Of course, there won't be time for fiddling on this mission as our intrepid heros seek to recover Nero's harp for The Museum of Fantastic Phenomena. Complete with accurate historical data on ancient Roman culture, *The Hypnotic Harp* will have kids eight and older cheering for the artful adventurers while they confront deadly gladiators, evade savage lions, and compete in a chariot race, all from the safety of their computer desk. Sanctuary Woods, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($39.95).



The Tortoise And The Hare

Video Jam: This amazing, easy-to-use program enables kids or grown-ups to make their directorial debut with their own animated mini-movies. Production proteges select from more than 50 cuts in six categories of music including rock, classical, rap, international and others. Then they can audition and hire from more than 40 wacky cartoon characters—animals, frontier westerners, stone-age rockers, ghouls, sea creatures, etc. Next, grab one of the 27 Hanna-Barbera-styled background scenes: tribal village, western town, moonscape, underwater world, haunted houses, and a selection of wild phantasmagoric sets with undulating light shows. With music, actors and scene selected, directors head into the studio to "film" action with easy control over movement, props and "magic" special effects. A setting even directs characters to move to the beat. After filming, directors can save their work to play it back for friends and family. The program includes five sample videos to give kids an idea of what they can create. *Video Jam* is an adorable, entertaining creativity tool that kids 8 and up should take to like little Fellinis. Teacher's Editions are also available. Electronic Arts, IBM ($49.95).



Video Jam

Word Tales: Milo, a child-friendly alien, has landed with one goal in mind—teach children ages 4 to 7 how to read. With a focus on initial letter sounds and vocabulary building, *Word Tales* offers entertaining animations and music combined with interactive fun and games to reinforce the learning process. Simple enough for children to use on their own, *Word Tales* is filled with fun and surprises. Time Warner Interactive Group, IBM with Windows and CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($59.99).



"HAH! Missed me!"

Bloodnet: The Prince of Darkness is back and, of course, he wants your blood. But he wouldn't mind sucking your data, too. Two literary genres, gothic vampire tales and cyberpunk, collide against the dark and surreal backdrop of 21st Century New York. Players of this role-playing adventure will jack-in to the cyberdeck of Ransom Stark, a down-and-out freelance hack who becomes enmeshed in a vampire-lord's plot to control cyberspace and the world. Cyberpunk role-players may fry their wetware over the rich character generation system (like *Ultima IV*, it uses the answer to "ethical dilemmas" to determine a player's character), extensive skill system, and broad array of future-tech toys (decks, moddies, smart drugs, bio-weapons). The graphics, including the odd interpretation of cyberspace, are wonderfully bizarre, and the fiction has a very hard edge. Pop the nootropics, cowboys, break out the dog-eared Gibson & Sterling, and prepare yourselves for what might be the best simulation of our Dark Future this side of Chiba City. MicroProse, IBM ($69.95).



Bloodnet

Command Adventures: Starship: Will there still be heroes in the year 2127 Galactic Standard Time? Will the galaxy be open for exploration and exploitation? Or, will pirates rule the spaceways? *Command Adventures: Starship* has the answer to these nagging questions and more in a game specifically designed for those who prefer their CRPG dishes served up cold (remember, in space no one can hear you freeze). The Galactic Wars are now over, but much danger still awaits those bold enough to traverse the distant reaches of space. Yet, all that's required to seek one's fortune is a sturdy ship, a capable crew, and a



Command Adventures: Starship

good blaster at one's side. Featuring outstanding CD quality audio (with up to eight digital sound effects played simultaneously), first rate graphics and animation, and a rich blend of strategy, action and role-playing elements, *Command Adventures: Starship* offers the role-player an atmospheric and engaging experience. Real-time space and ground combat, multi-layered parallax scrolling, random universe generation, and a massive contingent of configuration options will keep galactic commanders busy for eons. Merit Software, IBM ($69.95).

Dungeon Hack: The latest first person perspective CRPG from SSI is *Dungeon Hack*, a *Forgotten Realms AD&D* product using 2nd Edition rules. Unlike most first person perspective dungeon romps, *Dungeon Hack* is of the single character variety. Also unlike similar products, this game is highly customizable. A random dungeon generator enables gamers to generate countless dungeon levels, and so while the goal is always the same (finding and destroying the evil overlord), each game is unique. Gamers can specify the number of dungeon levels, the difficulty setting, and the number of monsters, traps, puzzles and other surprises. Each dungeon also produces a seed number that can be given to friends so that they can generate the same dungeon. Monster totals and player skills tallied at the end of the game allow for dungeon competitions among the more competitive players. Featuring fully animated 256-color VGA graphics, auto-mapping with printable maps, and major sound card support, *Dungeon Hack* is sure to spawn a revived interest in dungeon hacking and slashing. DreamForge Intertainment/SSI, IBM ($59.95).



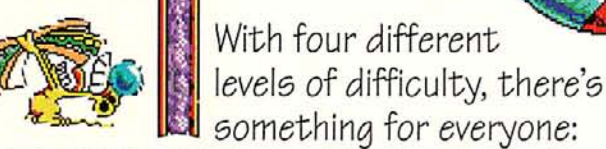
Dungeon Hack

Interplay 10th Anniversary Anthology: Interplay celebrates its "Tin Anniversary" with a silver disc of 10 games—one from each year of their publishing history. The disc has some real classics, including two *CGW* Hall of Fame games. The much-loved *Wasteland* transports players to the post-holocaust deserts of the American Southwest. Heavy firepower and judicious use of an excellent skill system are the only hedge against becoming vulture chow. The multiple solutions of puzzles and the detailed story of *Dragon Wars* earned it a special place in role-players' hearts. Also, *Bard's Tale* will provide enough hardcore hack n' slash and devious dungeon layouts to keep the RPGer in the dark all winter long. Among the other products are *Star Trek: 25th Anniversary*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Castles*, *Battle Chess*, *Mindshadow* (an all-text

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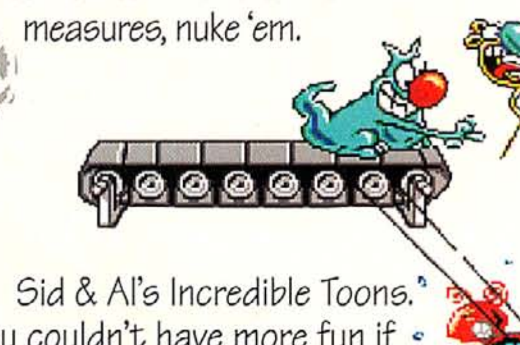


It's the story of a demented rodent and a twisted feline, Sid The Mouse and Al E. Cat, who splat, crash and blast their way through over 80 loony Rube Goldberg-style puzzles and over 75 mind-bending Toons parts including hairdryers, hat pins, and anvils.

Welcome to Sid and Al's Incredible Toons™. Following in the footsteps of its award-winning predecessor, The Incredible Machine™, Toons seems harmless enough. But once the boulders start rolling, anvils start falling, and dynamite starts blasting, you know you're in for a sick ride.

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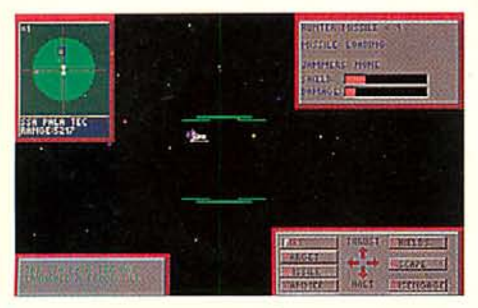


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Circle Reader Service #117

adventure), and *Tass Times At Tone Town* (a very hip graphic adventure that received too little attention in its day.) This is an excellent value for those who want to fill their game library with classic designs of days gone by. Interplay, IBM with CD-ROM.

Nomad: Part of a wave of action/strategy/adventure games based on space trading, *Nomad* places the gamer in the position of a hand-picked Earth Special Intelligence agent who has been volunteered for a Top Secret Level One mission. It seems that Earth is at a significant disadvantage. Ever since making contact with extra terrestrials, Earth has been on a technological slide downward, being unable to manufacture starfaring spacecraft. However, with the recent discovery and re-



Nomad

pair of a crashed alien vessel, Earth now has the ability to launch advanced intelligence gathering missions. More than a role-playing title alone, *Nomad* offers up an additional mix of action and strategy elements in the tradition of epic star exploration games of the past *(Starflight* and *Star Control 2).* Don your helmet and strap in for action. This mission will not be an easy one. Gametek, Inc., IBM ($39.99).

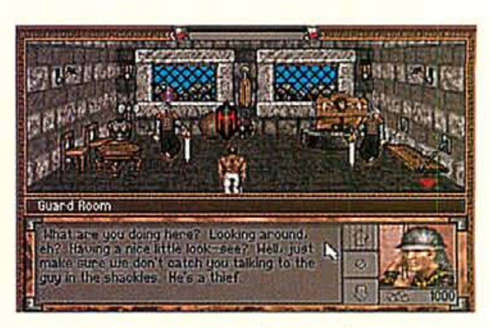
Ultima VIII: Pagan: It's the land that's named "Pagan," not what's going to happen to the Avatar. Or is it? In the latest game in computerdom's most epic series, Lord British removes the Avatar from Britannia proper and presents an entirely new series of challenges. The characters are larger, animation is



Ultima VIII: Pagan

more fluid (using the most "cels" per movement in the business). The emphasis has shifted from a party-of-characters mentality to an individual-in-conflict mentality, and the combat has more of an action feel than a traditional CRPG atmosphere. Origin Systems, Inc., IBM ($79.95).

Warriors of Legend: Possessing the look and feel of Virgin's earlier releases *Spirit of Excalibur* and *Conan The Cimmerian, Warriors of Legend* focuses less on the strategic element and more on role-playing. The same episodic format is employed, offering seven segments of play as one's band of four characters (a warrior, thief, wizard, and archer) sets out to battle the vile Black Circle and their ultimate nemesis, the God of Snakes. Those who enjoyed the previously mentioned titles should enjoy this light-duty CRPG. Seasoned veterans should let this title slither by. Virgin Interactive Entertainment, IBM ($29.99).



Warriors of Legend

The Shadow of Yserbius: This classy come-on for the popular ImagiNation Network (INN) takes the fantasy role-playing games of *Yserbius* and *Twinion* and drops them into one box. As far as the genre goes, these games offer standard fare, although the rate at which players earn gold and experience points is downright Carter-esque in its excesses. No matter, the object of this game is to delve into ten levels of the off-line game, and then use the one month, free usage certificate to explore the on-line game. Players will then discover what *real* computer role-playing is all about, as they team up with other members from around the country in live, interactive sessions. There's nothing like slayin' monsters and grabbin' gold with good friends. Sierra, IBM ($59.95).

SPORTS

"Shut up and PLAY BALL!"

Caesars World Of Boxing: Imagine a game with managerial strategy, customized boxing characters, rotoscoped boxing action, and video-taped film footage of ring girls between rounds. If it sounds a lot like Data East's *ABC's Wide World of Sports Boxing* with a few more bells and whistles, that's because it is essentially the same design. Players get to design their boxers, promote individual fights through a full boxing career, and learn how to handle the most devastating opponent ever faced by a sports professional—the press. Philips, CD-I ($49.98).

Electronic Sports Planner, College Football Edition: This intriguing little piece of software helps college football fans keep track of their sport from week-to-week. It includes four basic features: a game tracker that keeps a running total for selecting winning teams; a "StatsChecker" that presents a statistical database of the 1992 season; an office pool simulator which makes customized charts

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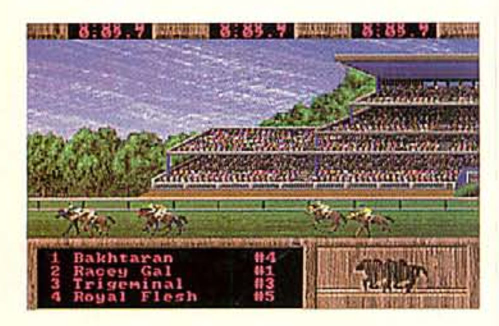


Incredible Universe

Computer City

and weekly tallies and prints them out; plus a schedule of the entire 1993 college football season. Bright Ideas, IBM ($19.95).

Firestone Country Club - Links Championship Course: Akron, Ohio, sight of the legendary Rubber Bowl, is also the sight of a premier stop on the PGA Tour—Firestone Country Club's South Course. This course, the subject of the latest SVGA championship course disk for the *Links* golfer, is presently the home of the NEC World Series of Golf. The brainchild of millionaire industrialist



Quarter Pole

Harvey Firestone, Firestone Country Club has been carefully recreated for desktop golfers, featuring the rich colors of October foliage and the challenge of one of the world's most demanding courses. However, make sure you take a sweater along. Ohio's chilly in December! *Firestone Country Club*, the sixth Super VGA championship course, requires *Links, Links 386 Pro* or *Microsoft Golf*. Access Software, Inc., IBM ($29.95).

Quarter Pole: Tired of fighting the crowds at the racetrack? Don't like the fragrant aroma wafting from the stables? Is betting at the track just too much of a gamble? If so, then *Quarter Pole* is possibly one's best option for becoming a hot bettor on the horses with the least personal risk and discomfort involved. Employing a first-person perspective interface similar to that of adventure games, rather than the usual menu screens, *Quarter Pole* brings a unique outlook to horse racing not available in other offerings. One can visit Big Al's Tip Booth, the Auction Tent, the Betting Window and the Grandstand. In an effort to build their fortunes, up to 10 bettors can get in on the action at one time. Play trifectas, exactas and daily doubles without risk. Players can even own and manage a stable if they desire to do so, buy and sell horses, and enter them in the races. *Quarter Pole* brings thoroughbred racing home for the holidays. In fact, it's open every day of the year, including Christmas. MicroLeague Interactive Software, IBM ($49.95).

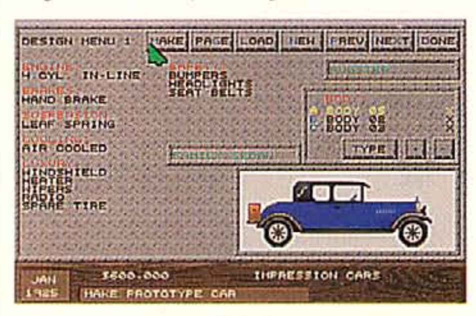
STRATEGY



"CHECK, MATE!"

Casino Gambler Kit: When it says Villa Crespo on the label, there is usually a good gambling game inside. This time, however, there are five. This "kit" is a combination of five of their *Coffee Break Series* gambling games and include *Dr. Wong's Jacks+Video Poker, Casino Craps, Duckus Roulette, Dr. Thorp's Mini-Blackjack* and *Ruckus Poker*. Each is a quick game requiring virtually no documentation, yet most have a surprising amount of depth and gambling savvy. For the gambler this holiday, stay away from the Christmas Club savings account—the *Casino Gambler Kit* is a safer bet. Villa Crespo, IBM ($49.95).

Detroit: The high concept of this game is "Automotive Tycoon." Gamers capitalize an automobile company (in any part of the world, not just Detroit) in 1908. From a graphic overview screen that looks like a map of the company's factory complex and serves as the main menu, gamers move the different areas of their concern: the Administration Building to hire/fire employees, negotiate wages and make job assignments, as well as



Detroit

open new offices, build/expand facilities; the Marketing Department to plan advertising campaigns and media buys; the Laboratory to design new technologies; and the Factory to get workers moving on getting different models to market. Impressions, IBM ($59.95).



Fantasy Empires

Fantasy Empires: Falling into the same category of such titles as *Populous II* and *Civilization*, SSI's *Fantasy Empires* transports the player into a world of mystical kingdoms where one's goal is to build an empire with the help of a computerized Dungeon Master. Based upon the *Dungeons & Dragons* game world, *Fantasy Empires* employs a unique digital mediator who guides the gamer through all elements of play, making sure he or she complies with all the official *D&D* rules. Up to five "rulers" can play at one time—human or computer controlled. Extensive character interaction employing advanced artificial intelligence provides for challenging diplomatic encounters, while commanding multiple troop types and interacting with fantastic races is facilitated


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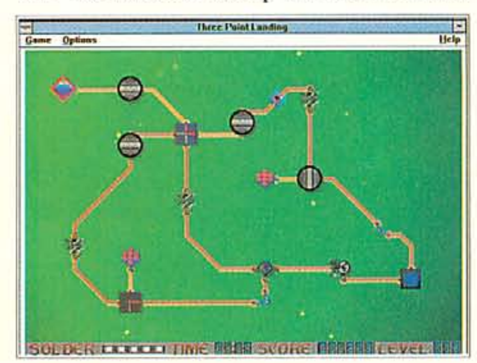
through a user-friendly interface. Real-time combat, from an overhead perspective, effectively draws the player into the action. Sending heroes on special quests and building up fortifications rounds out play. Digital sound effects, atmospheric music, and attractive 256-color graphics complement this highly playable package. Strategic Simulations, Inc., IBM ($59.95).

Logos Bible Crosswords: One can test their Bible knowledge against fun and challenging puzzles by Terry Hall and Tyndale House Publishers in *Logos Bible Crosswords.* Two hundred crosswords can be solved on the

Logos Bible Crosswords

screen or in the printed form. If you are running *Logos Bible Software* (sold separately), *Logos Bible Crosswords* cross reference the puzzle clues to the appropriate verse in the Bible. The puzzles can be gauged to one's skill level with difficulty settings, and single or whole-word hints are but a click away. Puzzles may be saved in progress, colors may be customized, and a special font, Scribbles, is included in both TrueType and Adobe Type Manager formats for that penciled-in look. Logos Research Systems, IBM with *Windows* ($39.00).

Nanotank: In this bizarre *Windows* puzzle game, the player controls a microscopic probe as it traverses the treacherous innards of a computer system in search of an evil virus. The 100 levels are set up like circuit boards



Nanotank

with an entry point and an exit. The Nanotank must cross the board while ensuring that the tank is connected to a powered "trace." The pathway is littered with odd components—switches, diodes, capacitors, relays, Optocouplers, teleporters—and the player must manipulate these components, occasionally using solder to repair broken parts, to make clear the pathway to victory. One doesn't need an Electrical Engineering degree, but that kind of problem-solving smarts would sure help. Twin Dolphin Games, IBM with *Windows* ($39.95).

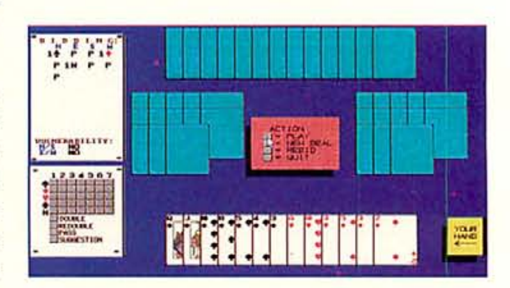
Positronic Bridge: Even though it uses a high resolution interface, *Positronic Bridge*'s strength is not in its visual presentation. Its strong suit is in its artificial intelligence and ability to challenge gamers with playing skills from novice to master. The program tunes itself to the user's skill level so that as the player's ability increases, so does that of the game; it more or less learns as the player does. Unlike many similar games, *Positronic Bridge* does not allow the computer to cheat—it can't look at the player's cards to make its decision. In addition, a copy of the best-selling booklet *The Basics of Bridge* by Montgomery Coe is included. A practice



SimCity 2000

mode and built-in help keys allow the player to polish their game. Two versions are available: Version 1, the basic version, and the Competitor Version, which features several bidding variables and additional scoring systems. ReadySoft, Inc., IBM ($49.95 Version 1, $99.95 Competitor Version).

SimCity 2000: *SimCity 2000* is an exponentially improved version of one of the most successful computer games ever. Players still have the power to build a metropolis from the ground up, but now gamers cannot make decisions without considering the political and economic implications. Rapid transit requires more consideration of actual logistics (placing transit stations at appropriate sites and deciding when they are underground and when they are elevated). Education (schools and funding) plays a major role in the long-term future of a city. Now, players can design highways and freeways to alleviate the stress of ordinary avenues. Players have a lot more options for clean power plants. Finally, cities do not have to have that square gridiron look. New ways of placing zones and the ability to place roads at a diagonal mean that players can even design historical urban areas like Washington and Paris. Maxis Software, Macintosh (IBM in '94) ($69.95).



Positronic Bridge

Socrates Chess 3.0: If one is looking for "the world's strongest PC chess program" with advanced artificial intelligence, search display (showing the computer's thought process on each move), a user friendly design, common function hot keys, and extensive handicapping features, *Socrates* may provide the perfect challenge. The culmination of over 15 years of development, *Socrates 3.0* (the latest version of this chess program—version 2.0 was employed as the engine for *Kasparov's Gambit)* combines state-of-the-art artificial intelligence with an easy-to-use interface. While it will not win any awards for its Spartan graphic and audio design, *Socrates* is the only chess program to achieve a plus score against human Grand Masters in an established tour-



Take A Break! Crosswords, Volumes I & II

nament. Excellence, however, doesn't come cheap. Players will need a 386 or 486 PC with a 486/50MHz CPU and 4MB RAM recommended for tournament level play, not to mention the cost of the program itself. Machiavelli Designs, Inc., IBM ($149.95, $129.95 limited time special introductory price).

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For the cold reaches of space, there's an awful lot of chummy people here.

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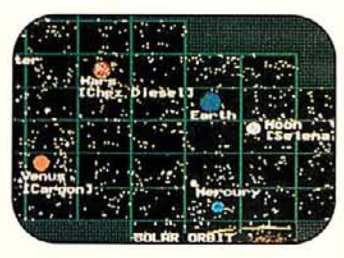
But if you're one of those special individuals who understands that creating an empire is ever so much more interesting than destroying aliens, maybe you *can* thrive in our space.

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Take A Break! Crosswords, Volumes I & II: Designed for use in a *Windows* environment, this exercise in alphabetic aerobics comes courtesy of Dynamix. With over 750 puzzles broken down into several sizes and complexity levels, there is enough here to keep one busy long enough to get their money's worth for this product. While an animated faery is your host, the animations and voice features also make their contributions to what is, essentially, a newspaper substitute for most of us (however, since these puzzles can be printed out, one can still solve them in the paper and pencil medium). The intuitive interface comes in particularly handy when playing against the clock for bonus points, and the inclusion of an auto-check feature and on-line hints will help serve the crossword-impaired among us. Dynamix, IBM with *Windows* and Macintosh ($49.95).

Unnatural Selection: The premise to this game could be the plot to the inevitable *Jurassic Park 2.* Genetic engineers have so perfected their art that they have unlocked the secrets of life. Of course, absolute power corrupts, and one of the engineers takes the modern archetypal role of Evil Scientist—breaking away from the group and using the technology to engineer behemoth reptiles—and she's got no amusement parks in her business plan. To combat this rapidly breeding menace, the player is called upon to fight reptiles with reptiles. With a fully stocked Genetic Engineering laboratory, the player must create his or her own reptile army by breeding creatures for selected traits. Once the perfect army has been assembled, the play shifts to an island battlefield. The player loads up transport helicopters with creatures and supplies, and then drops the goods at strategic locations on the island. Through careful breeding and skillful use of behavior modifying drugs, the player's army may eventually outbreed and outfight the enemy. Claymation clips of the reptiles in action adds a unique dash of graphic pizzazz to this odd and compelling title. Maxis, IBM ($49.95).



Unnatural Selection

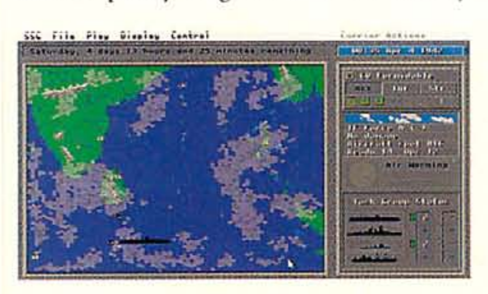
WARGAMES



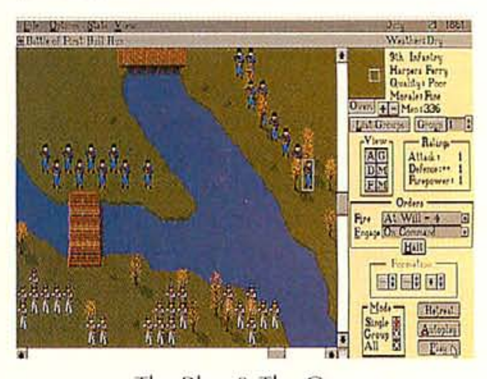
"From the Halls of Montezu-uma . . ."

Carriers at War II: Covering fleet carrier operations from 1936-1946, this sequel to SSG's popular re-release of *Carriers at War* includes player-suggested feature enhancements and additions, plus enhanced artificial opponents using SSG's WarRoom AI system. Scenarios include Plan Orange (the clash experts expected between the U.S. and Japan in 1936) which features plenty of battleships and only a few carriers, several covering a more active British fleet to oppose the Japanese advance into Southeast Asia, plus others covering those late war kamikaze battles, including an apocalyptic battle during the Allied invasion of Japan in Operation Olympic. SSG, IBM ($84.95).

Ed Grabowski's The Blue & The Gray: While not deliberately riding on the coattails of the Ted Turner epic *Gettysburg*, Impressions is surreptitiously here to feed the waxing interest in the men and history of the American Civil War. Like the film *Gettysburg*, the game *The Blue & The Gray* will not slake the thirst of the true devotee of this era; it was designed with an emphasis on pure entertainment rather than historical accuracy. In effect, *The Blue & The Gray* is a clean, playable game system which serves as an enjoyable, low-complexity war*game.* There are actually two games in the one package: a strategic game featuring divisions maneuvering through weekly turns, and a grand tactical wargame played in real time with a *miniatures* feel to it. Although the game was released with an historical novel and video cassette, we expect that only those who can overlook its historical shortcomings will have the wherewithal to discover that an enjoyable game lies within the box. Impressions, Amiga and IBM ($69.95).



Carriers at War II



The Blue & The Gray

Gettysburg: In a well-timed but largely coincidental release with the epic film of the same name, this Windows wargame has got plenty of options and light-weight gaming charm. Featuring brigade level units and time increments that can either be ticked off manually or let run at various speeds, there are plenty of gauges to monitor for each unit (morale, fatigue, ammo, etc.), but commanders have little to worry about besides issuing general orders. Artillery units are almost a sub-game unto themselves (fortunately there aren't too many to keep track of) as one sets their direction, firing trajectory and ammunition type. Easily learned and quick playing,

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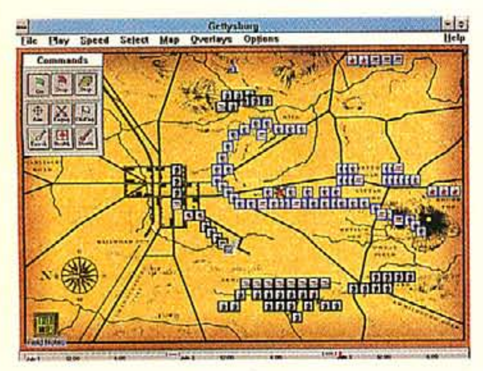


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Gettysburg

Gettysburg is a quaint wargaming diversion for the *Windows* wargamer. Swfte, IBM for Windows ($49.95).

Harpoon II: With a war room look to the graphics and a great gaming tradition to build upon, this long-awaited sequel to what many consider to be the quintessential wargame is packed with years of player suggestions and technological improvements over its illustrious predecessor. Features include SVGA hi-res graphics, military vector-style maps of the entire world (modeled down to two meters per screen), a complete weather model, and *global* naval conflicts in 15 scenarios. The database has been enlarged and graphically enhanced, and there is a logistics model that even includes aerial refueling. Aimed toward higher-end machines (at least a 386/33, but a 486 with 8MB of RAM is encouraged), the interface has been redesigned to the point where the design team says "It's not *Harpoon* for *Windows*. It's *Windows* for *Harpoon*." Three-Sixty Pacific, IBM with Windows ($69.95).

Romance Of The Three Kingdoms III: Combining elements of strategy gaming, role-playing and wargaming, Koei's historical series of games (*Nobunaga's Ambition*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Bandit Kings of Ancient China*) have been a welcome change of pace for gamers ever since they reached U.S. shores. Like its predecessors, *RTK3* requires gamers: to make economic and diplomatic decisions in order to build up



Harpoon II

the provinces under player control; to make management decisions regarding the training of troops and assignment of personnel; and to use terrain to their advantage in the tactical battle sequences. Unlike its predecessors, *RTK3* has gotten away from the clunky keypad interface that drove many gamers crazy with redundant input. Now, a smooth mouse-driven interface keeps the game moving, and eye-pleasing VGA graphics bring it up to date. Koei Corporation, IBM ($59.95).

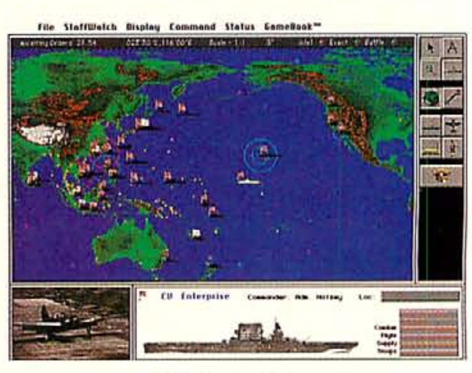
Third Reich PC: Where, oh where has Avalon Hill been? While the story behind the production of an IBM version of their popular *Third Reich* boardgame is a long one, suffice it to say that the old Amiga version code was completely scrapped and a new team has put together a wholly new product for the PC. While not based on the recently released *advanced* version of the boardgame, *Third Reich PC* still rocks with all of the bells and whistles of this classic WWII European Theater strategic-level wargame. Units are fleets, air forces, corps and armies that maneuver around the hex grid map through quarterly turns. Economics are emphasized as



Third Reich PC

nations must commit their resources in battles of maneuver and attrition along the game's three "fronts." Though the game has been delayed while the artificial opponent is being perfected, Avalon Hill hopes to make their splashy return to computer gaming by this Christmas with a spruced up, hot-rodded system that should quiet the skeptics. The Avalon Hill Game Company, IBM ($59.95).

Victory at Sea: A collaborative effort put out by the dean of board wargaming, renowned writer James F. Dunnigan, and Three-Sixty Pacific, this epic depicts the vast struggle between the Japanese and the Allies in the Pacific Theater of WWII. The detail leaves no island bypassed. Played in real time, players have the ability to telescope the action (and time scale) up from the highest levels of command, down to an operational perspective. Taking into account huge databases of information compiled by Dunnigan, leader-



Victory at Sea

ship, politics and logistics are emphasized with only a minimal amount of complexity. The action is punctuated with video clips of the fighting and the sounds of war. A full 100,000 word "book" of hypertext is available to players who want to access the history and make their play a truly holistic experience. The "monster" computer wargame of this holiday season, *Victory at Sea* is will make a big splash. Three-Sixty Pacific, IBM and Macintosh ($69.95).

Walls of Rome: If you haven't taken a look a Mindcraft's *Siege* games because they're set in a fantasy world, or because you heard some bad things about their speed and AI, it may be time to reconsider the system. The *Siege* engine has been significantly improved and brought into a historical setting. Romans, Greeks, Parthians, Celts, Gauls—chose your command and then choose to attack or defend dozens of historically accurate and beautifully rendered cities of the ancient world. New game features include campaign games in addition to individual battles, increased engineering options (undermining, siege towers, battering rams), and a more extensive game editor/scenario builder. The command interface has been reworked, and the game seems to run faster. It also appears as though the AI has become more savvy, attacking many different points and adjusting to the dynamic of the battlefield more quickly. A great concept may finally be maturing into a good game. Mindcraft, IBM ($59.95).



Walls of Rome

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SIMULATION



"Eight tiny reindeer, my foot!"

Aces Over Europe: The anxiously awaited follow-up to Damon Slye's *Aces Of The Pacific* will soon be buzzing the towers of local software peddlers. Though the interface and campaign game features are virtually identical to previous Dynamix sims (why fix what ain't broken?!), this is a major revision of the *AOTP* engine. The most notable improvements are a "Tall Resolution" mode (a 320x200 pixel view that gives gamers a larger window on the world) and gradient shading (allowing planes to have realistic paint jobs and fuselage detail). New missions will have gamers setting their bomb sites on bridges, railways, V-1 rocket launchers and radar sites, and a huge arsenal of new planes will have the player fighting or flying: P-51s, -47s, -38s, Spitfires, Mosquitoes, Me109s...and the list goes on. While we haven't played with the final, optimized code, it seems that the frame rate will be comparable to *Aces of the Pacific* with the "1947" upgrade. Dynamix, IBM, ($69.95).



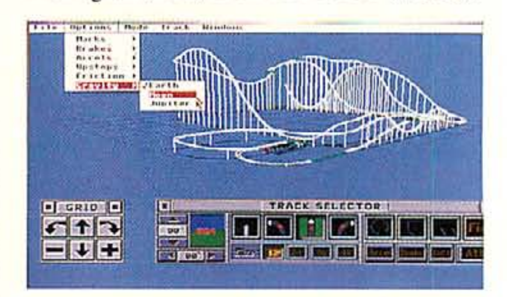
Aces Over Europe

Art Of The Kill: While not a game, this book with companion videotape is a crash course in flight combat tactics that may well improve the armchair jet-jock's game playing. The 165-page soft-cover book is written by Pete Bonanni, an instructor pilot with the National Guard and recognized personality among serious sim fans. The well illustrated guide covers basic flight maneuvers and has a set of tests to drill the reader on lesson comprehension. The videotape mixes air combat instruction and actual air combat footage, and will make swell viewing when the family is gathered for the holidays. Spectrum HoloByte, VCR ($39.95).



Backroad Racers Power Modeler

Backroad Racers Power Modeler: Combining a Revell model with a CD-ROM, this unique package delivers instructional demos with a racing simulation. Regardless of model included, the program offers a choice of "buying" and racing one of four muscle cars on the lot: '71 Hemi Barracuda, '70 Boss Mustang, '67 Chevelle or '67 Malibu SS Pro. After checking out the cars, modelers enter the garage to learn facts and figures on the vehicle, watch an animated, exploded view of the model's assembly, see complete assembly diagrams, and watch video modeling tips for painting, gluing and finishing. After making a purchase, an annoying salesman shows the competitive racers on a poster in his trailer. Another poster, this one active, offers access to four racing scenarios with three difficulty levels. The blocky, polygon-filled graphics and crude scenery yield a disappointing driving experience. But inexperienced "drivers" will be challenged to make it through the backroads to the track on time without getting any tickets. Since winning a race yields performance upgrades, the game may have decent replay value. If *Backroad Racers,* which seems geared for boys aged 8-16, isn't quite your speed, there are two other packages in the *Power Modeler* series: *European Racers,* which is now available, and *High Tech Aircraft,* scheduled for future release. Revell-Monogram, Inc., IBM CD-ROM ($69.95).



Coaster

Coaster: Roller coasters have been around since the early 1900s (earlier if you consider La Marcus Thompson's Switchback Railway, an early coaster predecessor). Loops were later added to increase the thrill of the ride, though in one case, poor loop design resulted in the death of all passengers—their necks were broken, the result of excessive strain. Still, roller coasters became so popular that some 1500 were in use in the U.S. during the Roaring '20s. Today only about 230 coasters dot the countryside in small and large amusement parks. Whether or not one has a coaster nearby, gamers can experience the "thrill" of the ride and of coaster design with Disney's *Coaster*, a roller coaster simulation. Though several pre-made coaster designs are included, the purpose of *Coaster* is to let the player design his or her own ride, from the ground up, and then test it out. Built-in critics will evaluate one's design as the player views their dream ride from a front row seat. Disney Software, IBM ($24.95).

IndyCar Racing: From the pit crew that brought *Indy 500: The Simulation* to the finish line comes a racing simulation that will redefine state-of-the-art racing sims. From the more detailed physics underlying every aspect of the model, through instant replays

HOLY CHEAT!



Axis the Gamecheater gives you a few new tricks in your favorite games — special powers, enhanced weapons, and extra lives. So now you can get on with the adventure, past that nasty spiked pit, without burning your last life in a bad Super Dave imitation. Or you can loose your vengeance with that outlaw turbo laser cannon you've always wanted. With *Axis the Gamecheater,* you get the little boost you need to keep the game *fun!* Superpowers are yours on demand — with just the press of a key!

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Circle Reader Service #44



IndyCar Racing

that take advantage of extra RAM, to the overall look of the texture-mapped cars, *IndyCar Racing* offers high performance gaming that qualifies for the pole position in every area. This is a simulation where the difficulty levels let rookies get around tracks like Laguna Seca with ease, but has expert levels where it is challenging enough to simply try to get around a high speed oval. For more details, see the sneak preview in the August issue (*CGW*#109). Papyrus Publishing, Inc., IBM ($74.99).

Microsoft Flight Simulator 5: With the blue skies over Redmond, WA never looking better, the release of *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5* will certainly result in many upgrades to this long-standing and best-selling sim. Providing digital pilots with a long list of new features to enhance their flights of fancy, *Flight Simulator 5* offers a new latitude and longitude system to help users locate destinations and current location; a "Land Me" feature that enables inexperienced pilots to complete their flights without landing nose-first; and more realistic sound effects and scenery (which expands in detail as approached by the aircraft). In addition, the weather system has been replaced with a more user-friendly and controllable version. Basically, the whole package has been spruced up to provide a more realistic and attractive flight environment. Photo-realistic instrument panels (digitized from actual aircraft) and realistic time-of-day effects have been added, as well. From flying high in a Cessna Skylane to a Learjet and a sailplane, *Flight Simulator 5* offers something for most airborne gamers. Microsoft Corporation, IBM ($64.95).



Microsoft Flight Simulator 5

San Francisco: Flight Simulator 5 Scenery Upgrade: With the recent release of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator v.5.0*, could a Mallard scenery disk not be far behind? San Jose to Marin County, Napa to the Golden Gate, *Flight Simulator* pilots can see it all in amazing detail. Mallard used satellite photographs as the foundation for their realistic ray-traced landscapes, and then created enhanced polygon images for low-level landmarks. It's so realistic that Bay Area residents will not only recognize the big buildings downtown, but highways, neighborhoods and districts as well. Stay tuned for Washington D.C., Las Vegas, L.A. and San Diego in the months to come. Mallard, IBM ($49.95).



Super-VGA Harrier

Super-VGA Harrier: The game play and interface are essentially the same as described in the review of *AV8B Harrier* in *CGW*#106, but the graphics have been enhanced tremendously. Computer pilots still fly carrier-based missions off the deck of the Tarawa, still prosecute intercept missions with less than optimal AIM-9M Sidewinders, and attempt to control 70% of the island pictured in the TAWADS map window. However, the action seems both faster and smoother than the earlier incarnation. Also, those who have not yet upgraded to VESA compatible SVGA can still play the simulation in regular VGA mode. Domark, IBM ($59.99).

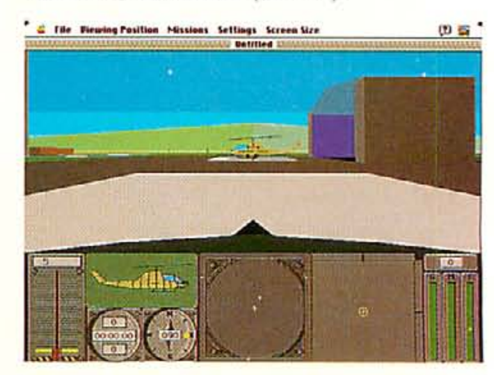
Strike Commander—Tactical Operations: No one is exempt from the certainties of life—Death and Taxes—not even mercenary F-16 pilots in the 21st century. While *Strike Commander* players hope to keep Death on hold as long as possible, taxes may be more difficult to evade than a hard missile lock. In the first add-on to the *Strike Commander* universe, the Turkish government decides that it needs to broaden its revenue base and



San Francisco: Flight Simulator 5
Scenery Upgrade

increase taxes on mercenary activities. In order to pay the taxes or move their base elsewhere, players must come up with a wad of cash—fast. This means tougher, more lucrative missions against B-1B Bombers, F-4 Phantoms and F-117 Stealth Fighters in such locales as Hawaii, S. Africa, Syria, Siberia, Nicaragua and Ireland. New features include General MIDI support, improved digitized sound effects, rudder pedal support, and a "realistic" option for those who enjoy a more challenging flight model. Origin Systems, IBM ($29.95).

Valkyrie: Ahhh, we love the smell of burning silicon in the morning! From the moment the speaker thumps with the dull roar of chopper blades and raises to a crescendo playing Wagner's *Die Valkyrie*, this helicopter fight/flight sim is there for a rollicking ride. While the graphics are not up to the standards of *Maximum Overkill* by any stretch of the imagination, the solid, polygon-filled objects are quite functional as one quickly grasps the flight mechanics and bounces through the ten missions included. A diversion with a raucous arcade feel, the *Valkyrie* helicopter flight simulator has multiple difficulty settings, multiple camera views, replays, and features a full screen display for all the action. Those not adept with a mouse can use a joystick. Gametek, Macintosh ($49.99).



Valkyrie



Circle Reader Service #34

HARDWARE


"Do you smell something burning?"

3DO Multiplayer: No infomercial is required to make gamers aware of the 3DO multiplayer. The newest 32-bit game machine allows gamers to: play games with digitized video or fast polygon handling, listen to audio CDs while watching an intriguing kaleidoscopic light show (courtesty of the built-in firmware); view and manipulate photographs stored on Kodak Photo-CD discs; and watch film and animation stored on CDs (compressed using SuperMac's Cinepak standard). At press time, the actual number of available titles for the system were limited to *Crash 'n Burn* (Crystal Dynamic's racing game with fast scrolling, but no physical model that comes bundled with the multiplayer), *Shelley Duvall's It's A Bird's Life* (Sanctuary Woods' children's title), *Mad Dog McCree* (American Laser Games' digitized shooting gallery presented in interactive film format), *Putt Putt Joins The Parade* (Humongous Entertainment's graphic adventure for children), and *Putt Putt's Fun Pack* (the Humongous answer to *Microsoft's Entertainment Pak* for the younger set, featuring six classic games). Fortunately, many more are currently under development. Panasonic ($699.95).


3DO Multiplayer

486 Power Kit: Tired of moving ever so s-l-o-w-l-y? Unable to play the newest games? Can't afford a new 486 computer? Well, there are alternatives. One is a *486 Upgrade Kit* from Buffalo which offers an affordable upgrade from most 286 and 386 computers to near 486 performance. The kit is comprised of a Texas Instruments 486DLC CPU, special cache activating software, and a chip puller. Slow 286 and 386 computers will benefit the most by this 15-20 minute do-it-yourself upgrade; 386/33 and 40MHz systems will show only moderate improvement. The 486DCL has no math coprocessor, but can make use of one if added. It does include a 1K internal cache, though, which helps improve performance. If dollars are tight, but a boost is necessary to play the latest games, some "Buffalo chips" may be just the thing to ease that strain. Buffalo Products, Inc. IBM ($199.00 - $469.00).



486 Power Kit

Amiga CD32: Mentioned in our last issue's READ.ME column, Commodore's Amiga CD32 should be available in limited distribution in time for the holidays. Those who pick up this CD-ROM gaming console will find the initial selection of games a touch limited. As is the case with most new systems, many of the initial releases will be computer game conversions; titles that take full advantage of the machine's new capabilities will be slow in coming. At press time, the actual titles to ship with CD32 had not yet been determined, so it is difficult to say what to expect at present. At its low entry price, however, it will only take a few really exceptional titles to make the purchase of this console a worthwhile one. It certainly has great potential, but Commodore has to overcome its reputation for poor marketing before the skeptics are silenced. Commodore Business Machines, Inc. ($399.95).

AVerKey Multimedia: Although is seems this product is geared toward helping business people project computer screen presentations through large screen or projector televisions (the thick manual explaining how to use *Windows,* clicking and dragging objects, etc. is a dead giveaway), we could not help but notice its more "practical" gaming applications. The *AVerKey* basically translates video signals for 640x480 resolution VGA monitors into standard NTSC or PAL video signals for TV. What this means is that one can drag their computer into the family room and plug it into the TV set for all to share. A 9-volt DC power adapter plugs into the wall, and signals can be sent out through either an S-VHS plug, a standard stereo cable, or back out to other computer monitors for multi-screen hook ups. This package includes a flicker filter and software control TSR program. Digital Media Labs, IBM ($349.00).


FlightStick Pro

FlightStick Pro: For those who swear by their CH Flighstick (or who can't afford a *ThrustMaster*), it's time to consider an upgrade. This version features three fire buttons and a "coolie" hat four-way viewing switch and, although the configuration is not user programmable, it can be used out of the box


"My Most Dangerous Adventure Of All Will Never Be Shown On T.V.!"
"I've had some close calls. But this is crazy! In The Challenge of Racer X,™ you'll face danger two ways. First, you'll take on the mysterious Racer X™ in a 200MPH free-for-all. You'll need everything in the Mach 5's arsenal just to stay close... Autojacks to leap clear of danger, chopper-blades to cut through obstacles, even a new on-board CRT that allows you to receive messages from Pops, Trixie, Spridle and Chim-Chim. And that's just the half of it. You'll also race against me from the cockpit of Racer X's incredible Shooting Star. But it won't be easy. Because Snake Oiler, Captain Terror, and all the evil villains from my TV show are out to send you over the guardrails. So fasten your seatbelt. Because you're gonna rip around blind curves on icy mountain roads. Leap over rocky chasms. Witness horrible fiery crashes! Gosh, I hope no one gets hurt."
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to support *X-Wing, F-15 Strike Eagle III, Strike Commander, Privateer, Falcon 3.02/MiG 29, Microsoft Flight Sim 4.0* and *Tornado*. CH Products, IBM with joystick port ($99.95).



CyberMan

Creative OmniCD Upgrade Kit: From those creative minds at Creative Labs comes another multimedia hardware combo offering a double-speed, multi-session photo CD compatible CD-ROM drive manufactured by Matsushita, a proprietary interface card, all necessary cables, and several programs including Aldus PhotoStyler SE Photo-CD access and imaging software. The speedy CD has a 64KB RAM buffer, a 300KB/sec transfer rate and 320ms access time, is CD-ROM XA ready, allows for up to four single- or double-speed CD drives to be daisy-chained together, has a front-loading automatic tray (caddyless) and is a snap to install. Those who already have a 386SX or better system with a sound card can add CD-ROM capability at a good price with this low-cost, MPC Level 2 compliant bundle. The only shortcoming is the lack of any CD games in the package. Creative Labs, Inc., IBM ($399.95).

Creative Sound Blaster 16 MultiCD & SCSI-2: Two additional sound cards have been added to Creative's stable of thoroughbreds. The Sound Blaster 16 MultiCD provides a greater degree of compatibility with a broader range of CD-ROM drives, including both single- and double-speed units. Supported are drives by Creative/Panasonic, the Sony CDU31A, and the Mitsumi FX001 and LU005. The Sound Blaster 16 SCSI-2 is designed for those using SCSI-1 and 2 data-intensive devices. It features an Adaptec controller chip and Adaptec's EZ-SCSI software. Data throughput is claimed at four times the competition. Both boards offer the same high quality sound support as previous Creative 16-bit cards, will accept the Wave Blaster daughter card (offering General MIDI compatibility wave table synthesis), and come in versions with and without the Advanced Signal Processing chip. Creative Labs, Inc., IBM ($249.95 MultiCD, $279.95 SCSI-2, $50.00 additional with ASP).

CyberMan: Not to be confused with the similarly named arch-enemies of Dr. Who, *CyberMan* is Logitech's newest "rodential" peripheral. More than a simple mouse or joystick, *CyberMan* is a 3D controller offering tactile feedback and pitch (forward and backward rocking), yaw (side-to-side motion on the same plane), and roll (side-to-side movement around an axis) support. When developers take full advantage of the support available with this controller, one will be able to perform more complex actions such as leaning forward and back or looking left and right. Though *CyberMan* will operate under *Windows* as a normal 3-button mouse, its real design is for three-dimensional gaming (use as a mouse under *Windows* may provide less than satisfactory results). *CyberMan* will be bundled with several fast-action interactive games. It is, however, backward compatible with existing entertainment products. Logitech, Inc., IBM ($129.00).



Reel Magic

Fan Card I and II: Although we get fan cards in the mail every day here at *CGW*, seldom do we get ones that plug into a PC slot. This computer card contains either one or two small fans to keep the air circulating around the boards and microchips. Now, more than the power supply can be kept cool by the computer's fan, and the *Fan Cards* run quietly, too. T. S. Micro Tech, IBM ($23.95 single-fan card, $44.95 dual-fan card).

Game Blaster: This product is another converter that allows VGA signals to be passed to a TV set. The *Game Blaster*, however, makes no pretense about business uses, but goes right for the gamer's heart (and wallet). Although it does not allow for the simultaneous showing of signals on both a monitor and TV set, the *Game Blaster* has two distinct advantages: it is considerably cheaper, and it comes with an assortment of game software designed for family room entertainment. The package includes Broderbund's *Prince of Persia*, Velocity's *Spectre Challenger* and *Jetfighter II*. Any computer gamer's elf might do well this year to look at this product and bring PC entertainment out of the closet and into a larger arena. Advanced Digital Systems, IBM ($169.00).

Reel Magic: Tired of low quality multimedia video? The solution might be the *Reel Magic* add-in board—an MPEG full motion video board with 16-bit sound card. The board is capable of delivering full-screen, 30 frame per second, high-quality video from a single speed CD-ROM drive. The board uses its own MPEG decompression chip to crunch video data without drawing CPU processing power. The result is very impressive. Several company's have comitted to supporting the board, and there will be a few titles ready for Christmas, among them Activision's *Return to Zork* and Interplay's *Lord of the Rings CD-ROM*. Sigma Designs, IBM ($449).

HELLO!MUSIC!: This multimedia package from Yamaha is for those who would like to enjoy the rich, realistic timbres of sampled instrument sounds with their software, but who may not have the extra slots or the technical finesse to configure one of the new wavetable cards. The actual *HELLO!MUSIC* package is really the *CBX-T3* tone generator module bundled with music software from Passport: *Turbo Trax*, a sequencing program; *MIDI Player*, and *Quicktunes*. The *CBX-T3* is a 16 bit wavetable sound module that is



HELLO!MUSIC!

compatible with general MIDI level 1, and with the flick of a switch, the Roland MT-32 (in a limited capacity). The *CBX-T3* also provides 192 different instrument sounds, 10 drum kits and digital reverb (through a proprietary digital signal processor).

We found that it took an MPU-401 MIDI card to make the *CBX-T3* module "talk to" games that support general midi. Unfortunately, *DOS* games won't work with the *CBX-T3* when it's connected to the serial port, because the driver is available only when running *Windows*.

Although a very good product, *HELLO!MUSIC!* is yet to be supported in its native mode by computer games. Yamaha, IBM, MAC, MIDI ($449.00).

STOCKING STUFFERS



"Darn heavy microchips!"

CD-Blaster: One can stuff thousands of little goodies into a stocking with this single CD-ROM. It features over 1000 sound effects, 300 MIDI music clips, 100 video screen savers, 200 photos, 400 talking icons, 100 cursors, and a mixture of digitized voices and impressions from Homer Simpson ("DO!") to Bill Clinton ("OH!"). Those who have as much fun playing with multimedia tidbits as with games should find *CD-Blaster* a wealth of fun resource material. Aristo-Soft, Inc., IBM with *Windows* ($39.95).



CD-Blaster

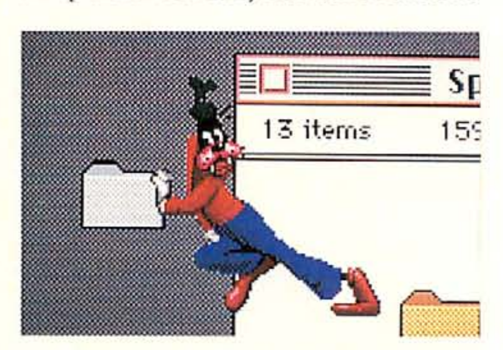
Computer Gaming World: Real computer gamers want real reviews, in-depth strategy, and an inside track on the computer game industry. For more than 12 years, *Computer Gaming World* has been doing just that. In fact, we are continually trying to pack even more information, perspective and graphics into each new issue. So, with a modest dose of humility, we suggest that a one year subscription (12 issues for $28.00) might be just the right stocking stuffer to keep computer gamers feeling like it's the holiday season, all year long. *Computer Gaming World* ($28.00 domestic, $78.00 foreign air mail).

Compute's Adventure Game Player's Handbook: Opening lines like, "Hold onto your joysticks folks...," are not the best of beginnings for a resource focusing on adventure games. Arcade games, yes. But adventure, no. Nonetheless, *Compute*'s latest offering, by Raymond Lueders, is a thorough guide to 37 popular adventure games. Looking through the list of included titles, one gets the idea that a concerted effort was made to include solutions to the most current and worthy quests, though there are a number of older titles represented (this book was two years in the making, thus accounting for some of the more weathered walk-throughs). Assistance is provided for *Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, The Legend of Kyrandia, The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes, Quest for Glory III, The 7th Guest* and 32 other games. Handy maps, object location lists and representative screen shots serve to enhance the value of each solution. Plus, a brief scenario accompanies every game. Though we don't consider it "the ultimate guide to adventure games" as claimed on the cover, it is still a handy resource to have on hand for those cold, wintry nights spent in the dungeons. Compute Books ($21.95).

The Disney Collection Screen Saver: Hi ho, hi ho, it's after work we go... Welcome to this, the latest in the *After Dark* series of screen savers. Here, Mickey is cast in the role of the Sorcerer's Apprentice, Goofy (dis)organizes one's *Windows* display, and a whole gamut of Disney escapades ensue. There are even official sounds and voices to give that full Disney dimension to the animated computer graphics. Berkeley Systems, IBM with *Windows* and Macintosh ($49.95).

Doodle-mation: This *Windows* diversion is for the "power doodlers" in the audience. *Doodle-mation* allows the user to select from a variety of shapes and animate them with special effects. The animated scenes can be edited frame-by-frame with a VCR-type controller, and music can be added. Favorite screens can be captured for use as *Windows* wallpaper, and favorite patterns can be turned into screen savers. Screen Magic, IBM with *Windows* ($29.95).

Easy Boot: Games are notorious for requiring "special" boot configurations. Booting one's system in a variety of different configurations is often the rule more than it is the exception. Many gamers have found an easy solution to this configuration dilemma through the use of batch files or a utility program such as *Easy Boot,* a multi-configuration editor and selector. Through a menu-driven interface, *Easy Boot* allows the user to set up and switch easily between 15 different



The Disney Collection Screen Saver

configurations. Though not necessarily the fastest way to reboot one's system under a different configuration (there are some speedier utilities), *Easy Boot* is definitely the easiest to use. CLEAR Software, Inc., IBM ($49.95).

Lights Out Sports Fans Major League Baseball Screen Saver: Licensed from Major League Baseball, this amusing *Windows* screen saver focuses on the team logos from throughout the league. These logos play in simulated "games" of baseball, have home run contests, hold spring training, and perform other feats of baseball skill. Quadrangle Software Corporation, IBM with *Windows* ($55.00).

Mega Rock Rap 'n Roll: For those in need of a beat, one's computer keyboard can be used to assemble several different, original music tracks in a variety of different "studios" (pop rock, rock you, boom boom bap, etc.). A colorful collection of controls allow for varying instrumentation, solos, and several other jive, rap and reggae tricks. A "hip help

man," provides the on-line help for the less musically inclined. Paramount Interactive, IBM with CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($79.95).

MovieSelect: Tired of scanning endless shelves, wading through countless videos, searching for just the right flick to take home for the evening? If so, try viewing Paramount Interactive's *MovieSelect,* "The Intelligent Guide To Over 44,000 Videos." This guide is designed to assist one in quickly, easily and intelligently choosing videos prior to arrival



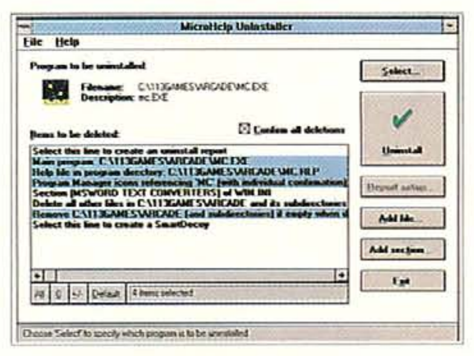
MovieSelect

at the video store. The four main programs, MovieSelect Recommends, Find It!, Hollywood Guide and Previews, allow one to sift through its massive database (VideoLog Select, favored choice of video industry professionals) from an interface one would expect of Hollywood—hi-res, 256-color glitter and gold. MovieSelect Recommends provides a list of recommended videos based on user preferences; Find It! lets one search the video database by title, actor or director; Hollywood Guide provides direct access to information on movies, actors and directors; and Previews allows the user to view any of the 12 included QuickTime digital previews. *MovieSelect* provides quick search times and helpful assistance for the film fan. Paramount Interactive, IBM with CD-ROM and Macintosh with CD-ROM ($59.95).

QuestBusters: The Book of Clues: After a long stint publishing the six-volume *Quest for Clues* series through Origin Systems, Shay Addams has struck out on his own with *QuestBusters: The Book of Clues.* The major change between this and the earlier *Quest for Clues* offerings is the lack of coded key words. Included previously as an added measure against "spoiling" one's gaming pleasure by inadvertently seeing the solution to one puzzle while looking for that of another, most gamers disliked the necessity of having to decipher these words in order to solve the puzzle addressed. The clue books actually became a puzzle in themselves. Thankfully, this coding is now just a faint memory. A new design in the layout of each walkthrough, highlighted and self-contained clue segments, serves to direct the reader's attention to the correct part of the walkthrough, preventing them from seeing the answers to puzzles encountered in other parts of the game.



Screenies



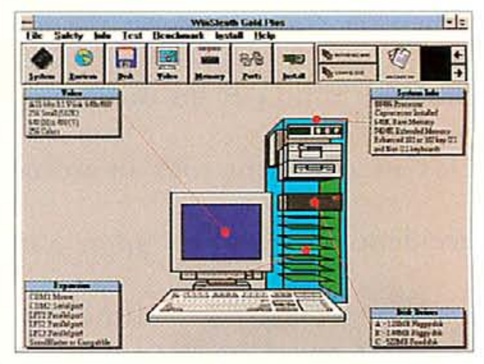
UnInstaller

The Book of Clues features solutions to 35 adventures, most of current vintage, including *Alone in the Dark, Betrayal at Krondor, Darkside of Xeen, Freddy Pharkas, Realms of Arkania,* and *Ringworld.* Maps are included for those games requiring them. Adventurers will find a stocking full of help with this resource. Clue Book Express ($18.95).

Screenies: Individuals! That's what we Americans are! Though we tend to express our individuality in odd outlets. Silly license plates, bumper stickers, tee-shirts, buttons, fancy hedge-trimming—it's all a part of the American way. Now you can assert your uniqueness and jazz up your computing environment with *Screenies. Screenies* are illustrated computer frames that attach to your monitor with Velcro strips. The available designs include Etch-a-Sketch, Howlin' Wolf, Drive-In Movie, Retro TV, Cat Box, and the office favorite, Ren and Stimpy. There are dozens of other designs as well, including two for the practical-minded: a dry erase border and a corkboard. They're a great gift idea for the stumped shopper. Screenies, 13", 14", and 15" monitors ($11.95).

Soloist: When used in conjunction with a Sound Blaster card, a microphone, and any musical instrument that one can play, *Soloist* is an interactive lessons instructor and analyzer. It awards points for speed and accuracy as the user plays (or even sings) on key to match the notes on screen. It is even possible to use *Soloist* to help tune instruments. Since no MIDI interface is required, it works with virtually any instrument, and transposition is done automatically. A nice product, but for some of us, it would take a *miracle* to learn to play music better. Ibis Software, IBM ($59.95).

UnInstaller: Okay, you've finished playing *"Balls of Fire for Windows"* and now you want to remove it from your system. Easy, right? Not necessarily. Cleaning up after messy Windows installations can be a troublesome and tiresome experience. Fortunately, MicroHelp has come to the rescue with *UnInstaller,* a handy housekeeping utility for the *Windows* user. Put simply, *UnInstaller* removes an application, all its files and all references to it, including WIN.INI, SYSTEM.INI, and application specific INI files. *UnInstaller* will even remove applications across a network server and all workstations on the network. Though it's not 100 percent foolproof, it's certainly a handy tool for the DOS-dummies among us. MicroHelp, Inc. IBM with *Windows* ($79.00).


WinSleuth Gold Plus

WinSleuth Gold Plus: Windows gamers entering the multimedia generation are likely to encounter installation and configuration woes in making the transition to sound and CD-ROM capability. A handy tool to ease that move is *WinSleuth Gold Plus,* a utility that enables one to troubleshoot hardware and software running under *Windows.* Having trouble with DMAs and IRQs? Trying to fine tune system performance? *WinSleuth* will help get *Windows* squeaky clean. Dariana Software, IBM with *Windows* ($189.00 SRP, $99.95 introductory special through January 1, 1994). **CGW**

Holiday Buying Guide Index

3DI Productions, Inc.
600 15th St.
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
(800) 545-7677

Access Software
4910 West Amelia Earhart Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84116
(800) 793-0073

Accolade
5300 Stevens Creek Blvd.
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One Microsoft Way
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San Francisco, CA 94104
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(818) 999-0606

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CGW

In Search Of...

The Ultimate Game Machine

CGW Explores The Mysteries Of Hardware And Compares Two "GameFrames"

by Paul C. Schuytema

Today's hottest games require more than just our own wetware to solve their mysteries; they also feed voraciously on hardware, hungry for MIPS, megabytes and megahertz. With the technological ante being raised every time we take a breath, it's hard to determine how much of a machine we need to handle the processing tasks of today as well as tomorrow. Reading *CGW* regularly will provide you with much needed guideposts, and currently, all fingers point to a 486-66 MHz system as the basic platform of choice. Add to that as large a hard drive as possible, a sound card, VL-Bus video, a large, crisp monitor, and a CD-ROM drive, and you have assembled a serious PC game machine.

Beyond the basics, what are the differences between systems? How do they perform on the field of battle? That, good readers, is my task for this day. Sitting on my old oak desk are two of the hottest 486 systems you can purchase: a Gateway 4DX2-66V and a Falcon Mach 5. I've worked with both, and they are both excellent, quality computers, light-years beyond the old 8088s of only a few years back.

But how they perform head-to-head is a question that I have yet to answer, and as I write these words (on my trusty no-name 486-33), I have no conception as to which machine will be the champion of champions. We will journey down that road together, and as I load each system with the most voracious, power-hungry game software available, I'll ask more out of these two computers than NASA asked out of its mission control computers when we put a man on the moon.

Time to dim the lights, warm up their heavy-duty power supplies, plug in my flightsticks, and let the games begin.

In one corner, weighing in at $2,995, is the **Gateway** 4DX2-66V. Included is a 486-66MHz processor, 16MB of RAM, one 3.25" floppy drive, and a **Sony** 150KB/second CD-ROM drive with an integrated CD tray. The motherboard features a VL-Bus which hosts an ATI Ultra XLR graphics accelerator with 1MB of onboard memory. It ships with Gateway's 15", non-interlaced, Crystalscan monitor, and a local-bus IDE interface (for controlling the hard drive). The hard drive is a 424MB **Western Digital** drive with built-in 128K cache buffer. *[At press time, we were informed that this system now includes a double-speed CD-ROM drive --Ed.]*

In the other corner, weighing in at $2,817 is the **Falcon** Mach 5. It is a 486-66MHz computer, sporting 4MB of onboard RAM with a 5.25" and 3.5" floppy drive and "drawer-style" 150KB/second CD-ROM drive. The motherboard also features a VL-Bus, which supports a **Genoa** 8500VL graphics accelerator (1MB of memory) as well as a VL-Bus floppy, serial and parallel controller card. I tested the system with the optional MAG 15" non-interlaced monitor. The hard drive is 212MB. Also included with the Falcon Mach 5 is a CH Gamecard III and Flightstick Pro, and a Sound Blaster Version 2.0 with additional RCA out-jacks, and a pair of self-powered speakers.

That's the tale of the tape, but what does it all really mean? First, let's look at the processor. The processor, or Central Processing Unit (CPU) is the heart and soul of the computer, the neural center of all your computer's activity. A 486-66MHz processor is the best and brightest of the 486DX line of CPUs from **Intel**, supporting over 1.2 million transistors in a single chip and able to process well over 40 million instructions per second. A 486 CPU, whatever the speed, is a 32-bit chip, meaning that it can handle its information in chunks of 32 bits of binary data. The 486 also features another integrated chip, a floating-point processor, which handles all of the complicated math tasks of the computer. 486SX chips are essentially 486DXs, except that the integrated floating point processor has been disabled. You may also see 486 computers advertised as SLC chips. This is a term used to indicate non-Intel 486 clones, the most popular of which is the **Cyrix** 486SLC. The SLC is essentially a clone of the 486SX, but engineered for a lower power drain and designed for the limited power environment of laptop computers.

Both of the computers facing each other in this feature are DX2 chips, which are Intel's "speed doubler" chips. Essentially, they are 486-33MHz chips which have had their internal clock speed doubled



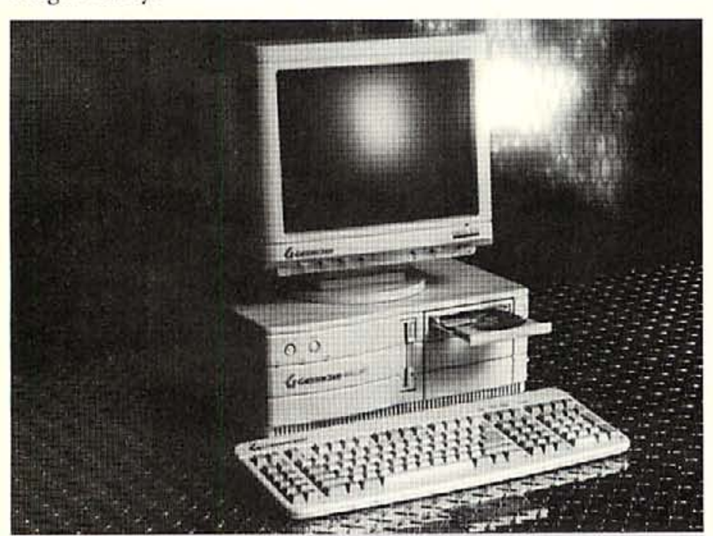
Falcon Mach 5

CONFIGURATION: 486-66MHz, 4MB RAM, 250MB Hard Drive, Mitsumi CD-ROM drive, 3.5" & 5.25" floppy drives, Genoa 8500VL graphics accelerator with 1MB VRAM, 14" Super VGA monitor, mouse, keyboard, DOS 6.0, CH Flightstick Pro, CH Gamecard III, Sound Blaster Version 2.0, powered speakers.
COST: $2,499
OPTIONAL ACCESSORIES TESTED: MAG 15" non-interlaced monitor ($317)
MANUFACTURER: Falcon Northwest
263 S. Bayshore Drive
Coos Bay, OR 97420
(800) 258-6778

to 66MHz. "MHz" is a term which refers to millions of cycles per second and is used to rate a CPU's internal crystal clock, which keeps the chip in sync and running smoothly. While somewhat of an abstract term, a processor with a higher MHz rating will be a faster processor.

Probably the next most important feature of these two systems is the VL-Bus. A bus is a data-channel which allows the CPU to communicate with the rest of the computer's components. For years, the dominant bus has been the ISA (Industry Standard Architecture) bus, a slow, 16-bit bus which generally runs at 8 MHz. This is fine for such things as modems, but is a major bottleneck for video and hard drives. A local bus breaks this limitation by providing a direct path from the CPU to certain components of a system, such as a video controller. While local buses have been around since the "dawn" of computers, desktop local buses have only really surfaced in the last few years. The problem was that, up until very recently, there was no set standard, so a local bus video card that would work on one system wouldn't be guaranteed to work on another. The VL-Bus is changing that by providing an industry standard bus configuration. The bus is named for the VESA (Video Electronics Standards Association) developed constraints and restrictions, which limits the bus speed to around 40 MHz, with no more than three VL-Bus components on a system. VL-Bus components can also perform a feat known as "bus mastering," in which they actually take precedence over the CPU for a time to perform a given function. In the near future, the PCI Bus, developed as a result of a push from Intel, might give the VL-Bus a run for its money, but for now, the VL-Bus is the safe, high-performance road to take.

Another important concern for game players is the monitor itself. Large is definitely better, and a 15" monitor feels far superior to a 13" or 14" model. A non-interlaced model is the way to go, since it means that the electron beam which creates the display redraws the entire screen each pass (as opposed to an every-other approach on interlaced monitors), which eases flicker and eyestrain, and greatly improves the image's clarity.



Gateway 4DX2-66V

CONFIGURATION: 486-66MHz, 16MB RAM, 424MB Hard Drive, Sony CD-ROM drive, 3.5" floppy drive, ATI Ultra XLR VL-Bus video accelerator with 1MB VRAM, 15" Crystalscan monitor, mouse, keyboard, DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1, choice of application software.
COST: $2,995
MANUFACTURER: Gateway 2000
610 Gateway Drive
P.O. Box 2000
North Sioux City, SD 57049
(800) 846-2000

Now that we have defined our terms and know the stats of each system, it is time to put them to the test. First, we'll look at some "dry" numbers that indicate benchmark performances in areas important to game players. The first test is hard drive performance, which will indicate the rate at which a drive can read and send data to the CPU (the data-throughput), the amount of time it takes a hard drive to find and access a particular piece of data (the average seek-time), and an overall performance rating.

Road Work (Data Throughput)

Hard Drive Performance
(with Smartdrive disk caching)

	Transfer Rate	Seek Time	Performance Index
Falcon Mach 5	3,466 KB/sec	13.8 ms	24.6
Gateway 4DX2-66V	2,838 KB/sec	11.7 ms	21.6
486 33 MHz "generic" clone	1,215 KB/sec	16.9 ms	10.5
386 40 MHz "generic" clone	1,082 KB/sec	12.8 ms	10.7
"Ancient" IBM/XT	85 KB/sec	79.0 ms	1.2

In these tests, the Falcon's victory in the data-throughput test is a result of the VL-Bus disk controller, which allows large amounts of data to move very, very quickly from the disk to the CPU and memory. The Gateway's edge on seek time is due to the hard drive's integrated 128K cache buffer.

Conditioning (Basic Performance)

The next test indicates basic levels of computer performance using an IBM/AT with a 6MHz 80287 math coprocessor as a benchmark system. In this test, the video test indicates not the frame rate of the video, but rather the raw speed in which information can be transferred from the CPU to the graphic card's video memory. The CPU and FPU tests indicate how fast the imaginary IBM/AT would have to operate to equal the performance of the tested systems.

System Performance

	CPU Speed	CPU Test	FPU Test	DOS Text Speed
Falcon Mach 5	66.7 MHz	222.9 MHz	544.8 MHz	13,284 chrs/ms
Gateway 4DX2-66V	66.9 MHz	223.4 MHz	546.7 MHz	7,801 chrs/ms
486 33 MHz "generic" clone	33.4 MHz	111.5 MHz	272.4 MHz	3,130 chrs/ms
386 40 MHz "generic" clone	40.2 MHz	59.6 MHz	no FPU	2,386 chrs/ms

Benchmark software: Landmark Version 2

At the most basic levels, the Falcon and Gateway are dead even until we come to the video data performance. The Falcon motherboard's VL-Bus and the Genoa card are able to transfer raw data at nearly twice the speed of the Gateway.

This discrepancy brings us to our next test, which indicates how quickly the systems can display three-dimensional polygon information in real-time animation. While the data transfer test is more abstract, this Superscape (a well-known virtual reality development company) test more accurately represents the tasks the computers will be asked to perform in the heat of intensive gameplay.

Superscape Three Dimensional Frame Rate Test
(times given are in seconds)

Falcon Mach 5	with Genoa accelerator	41.6
Gateway 4DX2-66V	with ATI accelerator	45.4
486 33 MHz "generic" clone	with Diamond Stealth accelerator	15.3
386 40 MHz "generic" clone	without accelerator	13.3

While the Falcon system could transfer video data much faster than the Gateway, the ATI card in the Gateway was more adept at processing the information into an actual image we can see. Both perform light-years beyond the "king of the heap" video accelerator of only 18 months ago, and phenomenally better than a non-accelerated video display system.

The Thrillah With Vanilla (Main Event)

While these tests clearly show the two systems to perform well beyond standard 486 systems, we haven't seen how their stamina holds up to the excruciating demands of game software. For this bout, the systems met head-to-head at center ring with identical, optimized config.sys and autoexec.bat files which maximize the amount of free conventional memory, and are "vanilla" systems, meaning that nothing is loaded except the drivers necessary to access such things as the CD-ROM drives and sound cards.

I should note that the Gateway does not include a sound card (though it does have a Sony CD-ROM controller card which provides CD-ROM sound). I installed a Sound Blaster Pro in the Gateway, and used the same set of studio monitors (not those included with the Falcon, which are a little low on bass-response for my tastes) for both systems. I used the same CH Flightstick Pro on each system, but on the Falcon, I plugged the joystick into the dedicated controller card, while on the Gateway, I used the port on the Sound Blaster card (the Gateway does not include a game port). Those disclaimers aside, I set out several hours and installed *X-Wing, Strike Commander, Links 386 Pro* and *7th Guest* on both systems to see how they would play.

Round 1 (*X-Wing*)

First, I dimmed the lights and brought up *X-Wing*, and performed my test of entering the first training mission, accelerating to full power, heading through the first four gates, then performing a double roll before entering the fifth gate. This test not only required CPU intensive polygon calculations, but also required hard disk access to move from the training room to the first mission. The Gateway performed the flight in 22 seconds while the Falcon came in close at 23 seconds.

Round 2 (*Strike Commander*)

Next, I dropped my blaster helmet and slid into my khakis and loaded up *Strike Commander*. I set up a dogfighting training mission with five ace bogies (MiG-21s) coming at me at 15,000 feet. I timed not only the time to load the mission (from the armament screen) but also the time it took to accelerate to 500 knots and then execute two and a half snap rolls. The Falcon performed the run in 35 seconds while the Gateway took 40 seconds. I should note that *Strike Commander* is probably the most hardware-intensive game yet released, and loading the mission took the brunt of the time. Both systems performed the snap rolls so quickly that I had to shake back a bloody nose and a potential "red-out."

Round 3 (*Links 386 Pro*)

Sloughing my khakis for some plaid polyester pants, I headed for *Links 386 Pro* and the second hole at the Belfry, in North Warwickshire, England. On both systems, I set all levels of realism to maximum (overkill, really, since who needs to see every needle on a pine tree 300 yards away?), and simply recorded the time it took to render the second hole's panoramic scenery (I chose the second hole instead of the first since *Links 386 Pro* loads trees and other objects into memory the first time it renders a course, so the first hole is always a slow draw). The Gateway stole the show, rendering the scene in 5 seconds, while it felt like the Falcon struggled a bit as it took 11 seconds to draw the scene. Since *Links 386 Pro* is one of the handful of programs that actually make use of more than 4MB RAM, and since the Gateway system sports a whopping 16MB, the performance difference can easily be attributed to this extra RAM. I should mention that to run *Links* on the Gateway, I first had to run ATI's VESA-mode emulator program from the DOS prompt.

Round 4 (*The 7th Guest*)

Finally, I showered and neatly folded my warwick-plaids and lit up a nice calabash pipe, took a mellow puff, and picked up a sweet, though hauntingly disturbing Victorian porcelain doll. I loaded up *7th Guest*. In the Stauf mansion, I simply recorded the time it took to ascend the eerie blue marble stairway up to the second floor. The Falcon won out at 14 seconds while the Gateway nosed in second at 16 seconds for the long climb. While the Gateway's extra RAM allows it to crunch the video numbers more quickly, *7th Guest* reads its video directly off the CD-ROM, and it seems that the Falcon's CD was able to deliver the data faster. Of all the games I installed, I only had problems with the *7th Guest* on the Falcon, which required some tweaking and reinstallation even with the Genoa fix provided by Trilobyte.

Split Decision

As you can see, performance wise, both machines fared nearly equally in the field of play. As for my subjective impressions, both were dream-machines, full of enough power for every game I threw their way. The quality of the video was an absolute toss-up, both producing rich, gorgeous displays, and with the Sound Blaster installed in the Gateway, both sounded as good as I had hoped.

Can I pick a winner? Well, it depends on what you really want to do with your steroid-fueled game computer. If you want a computer to double as a nine-to-five system, and you run a lot of Windows applications, I would have to recommend the Gateway. The ATI graphics card is set up to run Windows better than the Genoa card installed in the Falcon, Windows is included, and the mouse is genuine Microsoft.

On the other hand, if you want to go all-out for games, the Falcon is the best bet for your money. You get a better monitor (the MAG monitors, both 15" and 17", are *PC Magazine* Editor's Choice winners), and a bundled joystick, high-speed game card, speakers and sound card. Though, I will say, the Focus keyboard included with the Falcon feels cheap compared to the "liquid-touch" of the Gateway *Anykey* keyboard.

If you are looking purely at the dollar signs, the Mach 5 and the 4DX2-66V finish in a dead heat, value-wise. While the Mach 5 is $178 lower in price and includes over $200 worth of gaming accessories, the 4DX2-66V offers 12 additional MB of RAM, a hard disk almost twice the size, Windows software, and a choice of one "real world" application program.

The bottom line, though, is that both of these systems are the best of the best, and I'd bet that whichever you purchased, you'd be very satisfied with the ability to fly immelmans around nearly every other computer on the planet. Though "ties are like kissing your sister," we hope this comparison at least gave you a better understanding of the factors involved in a gaming hardware purchase and made you better-armed for the hardware wars. CGW



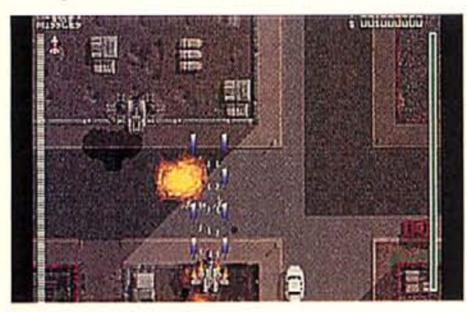
Stocking Up On Holiday Joy With Our Holiday Shareware Picks

by Chuck Miller

As we enter the Holiday season I thought I'd offer my own abbreviated Buying Guide of excellent shareware titles to stuff in your favorite person's stocking. Because of space constraints, I have limited the focus to three of the shareware industry's highest caliber publishers: **Apogee Software, Epic MegaGames** and **Software Creations**. All of the following titles are highly recommended, and most are more reasonable than retail for any Scrooges in the crowd.

Reaching the Apogee

A steady stream of entertaining and playable games have flowed from the prolific shareware fountain known as Apogee Software. Their only significant failing has been the continued use of EGA images in a VGA world. Thankfully, this has changed with the release of four new games: *Halloween Harry, Duke Nukem 2, Blake Stone 3D* and *Raptor: Call of the Shadows*, the latter two being the most significant of these new offerings. While I intended to cover both *Blake Stone 3D* and *Raptor*, I was unable to coax my beta of *Blake Stone* to run (it arrived the day this column was due). So, I will limit my coverage to that of *Raptor*.



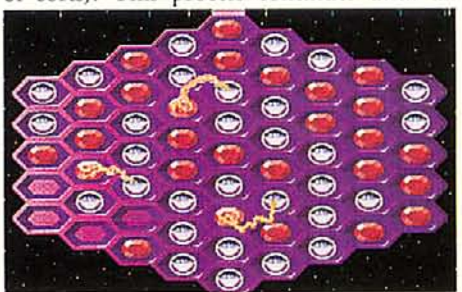
Raptor

Simply put, *Raptor* is Apogee's most professional and competent release since their publishing of Id's *Wolfenstein 3D*. A top-down perspective, vertical scrolling shooter, *Raptor* offers a look familiar to players of *Xevious* and *Sidewinder*, sporting smooth animation and high quality VGA graphics. One begins each mission from the Hanger Deck where, before departing for battle, pilots register in the Locker Room (entering their name and selecting from one of several portraits) and equip their fighters from the Supply Room. When ready to depart, the player begins mission one (two additional missions are available upon registration). Each mission consists of nine or ten levels of wave after wave of attacking ships with a final "boss" ship at the end of each level.

In addition to the exceptional 256-color VGA graphics, a substantial audio soundtrack is provided, as are the requisite digitized sound effects. Major sound boards are supported, including support for General Midi. Those wishing to enlist with *Raptor*, as well as check out other new titles from Apogee should contact Apogee Software, P.O. Box 476389, Garland TX 75047 or call (800) GAME123 (MasterCard, VISA and Discover accepted). *Raptor* is $34.95 plus $5.00 shipping and handling and is due for release in early December. Action aficionados will find it a holiday treasure.

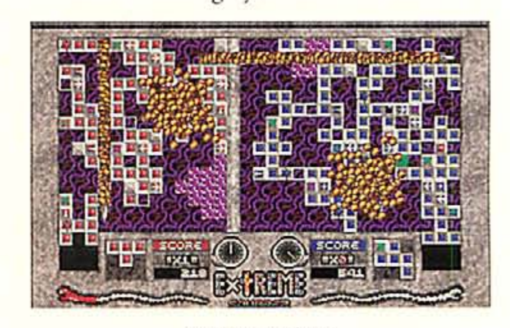
Such Wonderful Software Creations

My favorite of three new titles from Software Creations is *Hexxagon*, and its registered sister *Hexxagon II*, developed by Argo Games. Similar to *Thromulus* and *Spot*, *Hexxagon* is a turn-based, animated strategy game of conquest. Pitting two players against each other (human vs. human or human vs. computer), *Hexxagon* requires that you obtain and control more hexes on the playing field than your opponent in order to win. Each player begins with three hexes and seeks to acquire more by moving or jumping to adjoining vacant hexes, or by landing next to an opponent's hex(es) and consuming their piece(s), replacing it or them with their own (cell mutation, of sorts). This process continues until all hexes are occupied, with the winner holding the most territory. While play is simple, *Hexxagon* is an extremely addictive game, more so than many similar titles.



Hexxagon

This shareware gem features 256-color VGA graphics, Sound Blaster sound effects, multiple difficulty settings, and an easy-to-use interface. A built-in board editor allows the player to construct his or her own board designs, with the ability to save five favorite configurations. *Hexxagon* is one of the best stocking stuffers around for both the strategy gamer and for those who normally don't play strategy titles. It is available for $20, plus $2 shipping and handling. Upon receipt of payment, *Hexxagon II* will be mailed to all registered owners. I highly recommend it.



Squarez Deluxe

Squarez Deluxe, the second game from Software Creations, is another strategy title. The goal of this strategy puzzler, which has a *Tetris*-like feel, is to race against the clock or stay ahead of your opponent in the process of building "squarez" (square blocks of tiles, as the name implies). What makes this puzzle game interesting, though, is the variety of pieces used. Sporadically, hazardous chemicals, missiles, bombs, spikes, and other bizarre items appear in one's pieces, making placement a critical matter. Forming a square containing one of the special pieces activates it. Speed also plays a factor, rewarding faster players with more points. Three levels of play help spice up the action: Basic mode for traditional puzzle gamers, Normal mode offering a balance of special tiles, and Extreme mode filled with bizarre tiles and surprises.

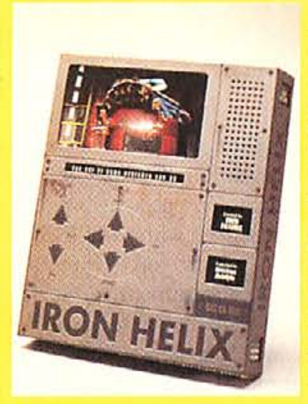
Support is provided for one or two players. In addition, *Squarez Deluxe* requires VGA graphics and 640K RAM, and features Ad

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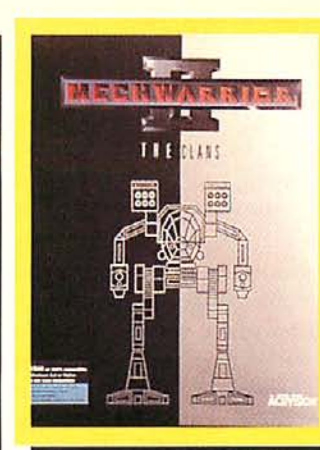
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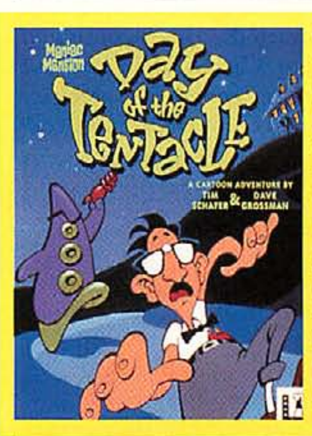
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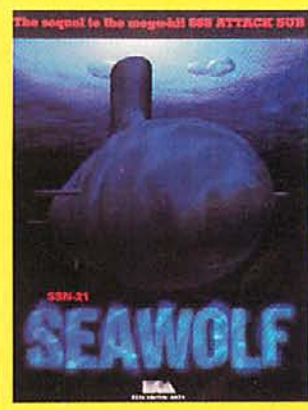
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'DAY OF THE TENTACLE' Dr. Fred's mutated purple tentacle is out to take over the world. Travel through time with three outrageous characters. CD ROM version has full digitized speech. Features the voice of Richard Sanders who played Les Nesman on WKRP.
Floppy Disk $39
CD-ROM $45



'SSN-21 SEA WOLF' is the sequel to the smash hit 688 Attack Sub. A crisis has erupted and fighting between the US and Russian's navy has occurred. As the commander of the SSN-21, you are ordered into battle to destroy the fleet. Features over one hundred 16-bit digital true stereo effects. **$52**

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IBM CD ROM

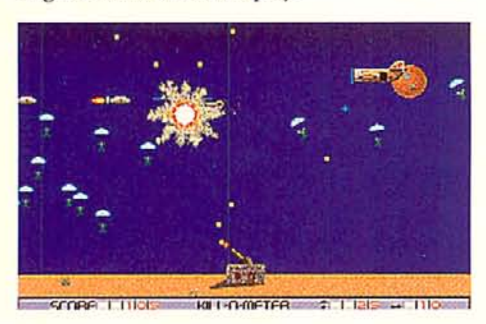
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Dragon's Lair	$36
Dune	$54
EcoQuest	$42

Lib/Sound Blaster compatibility. Twenty bucks plus $2 shipping and handling delivers the registered version featuring many game enhancements.

Gamers with greater action in mind should check out *Night Raid* (Argo Games), an arcade shoot 'em up where you must defend your lonely desert bunker from wave after wave of planes, helicopters, scuds and parachutists. Let just three 'chutists land and the game's history. Successfully defending your bunker earns rewards in the form of cute intermission performances—pizza delivery was my favorite—and the chance to see your name immortalized in digital light on the High Score page.

Each level is comprised of a certain number of transport planes flying overhead, dropping parachutists on their way across the screen. Shooting a plane before it begins unloading 'chutists is the best route, as a screen full of falling troopers are harder to handle. However, as a plane explodes, it often drops wreckage on paratroopers who have landed. Let one bomb or missile slip by, though, and it's good-bye bunker!

Night Raid features 256-color VGA graphics, multi-channel sound effects (for Sound Blaster and Disney Sound Source), over 20 minutes of music (Ad Lib/Sound Blaster) and an easy to use interface. Though simple, *Night Raid* is a blast to play!

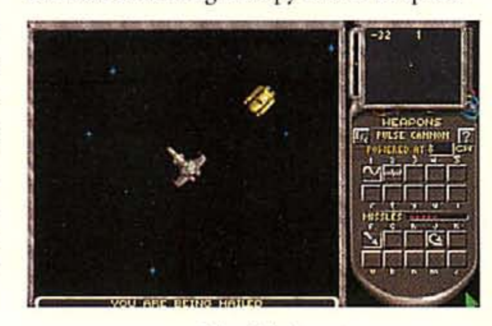


Night Raid

A 286 or better PC is required, though a 386 is strongly recommended. Registration is a mere $15, plus $2 shipping and handling (while the shareware version includes only three levels, the registered version adds an extra 11 levels). Those wishing to order either *Hexxagon, Squarez Deluxe* and/or *Night Raid* should send a check or money order (in U.S. dollars) to: Software Creations, 26 Harris Street, Clinton MA 01510 (MA residents add 5% sales tax). Please specify disk size. To place an order with VISA or MasterCard, call (508) 368-8654.

Games of Epic Proportions

Two titles from Epic MegaGames that soon may be swooping your way are *Solar Winds* and *Zone 66*. The first, *Solar Winds*, offers players the opportunity to explore the vastness of space in the tradition of *Starflight* and *Star Control*. As Jake Stone, a galactic bounty hunter, the player is charged with completing numerous missions which force him to choose between stellar government and rebel forces. Though much of the game involves delivering goods in exchange for desirable (and necessary) items, and in fighting off hostile attackers, one must, in the end, take a stand on one side of the conflict. Staying alive long enough to reach the game's conclusion will be no easy feat. Careful management of resources and regular game saves are necessary to avoid becoming a crispy cinder in space.



Solar Winds

A "camper's stew" concoction of gaming elements, *Solar Winds* includes fast-paced arcade action, strategic planning and role-playing elements all stirred together to make this sci-fi title a tasty and filling dish. While emphasis does seem heavier in the action (ship-to-ship combat) and strategy (resource management) elements, there are still sufficient role-playing components to widen the appeal of the game beyond that of strategists and wargamers alone.

In all, *Solar Winds* is an exceptional product and worth the $30 registration fee (plus $4 S&H). For that price you'll receive both episodes of *Solar Winds (The Escape and Universe*—only Episode 1 is shareware); a hint booklet, a disk of bonus games; and a shortcut patch that gives you extra energy and missiles. A 286 or better, VGA graphics and 512K RAM are required.

Zone 66, a high-tech 32-bit arcade game for 386 and faster MS-DOS compatibles, allows the player to be a pilot in a war-torn future where survival requires defending the homeland from hostile enemies. In this action title, one must fly a fighter jet through a huge 360-degree scrolling playfield viewed from a top-down perspective. The goal: inflict massive damage on enemy bunkers, artillery and industrial sites, effectively stopping them in their tracks before there's no one left to defend.

Featuring a unique introduction, excellent VGA graphics, and a high quality, upbeat audio soundtrack, *Zone 66* offers joystick jockeys a healthy dose of entertainment for their money. However, occasional thumb twitchers may find the action a bit much to bear, as this title is quite intense. *Zone 66* also requires some extra configuring to get it up and running, because it employs an ultra-fast mode that takes full advantage of 386 or faster systems and, as such, will not work if you have any memory managers or TSRs loaded.

The shareware version of *Zone 66* includes the first of four missions, all of which are available once registered. These include: Foreign Shores, Ice Wind, Desert Heat and War Planes. Registration is $30, plus $4 shipping and handling. An add-on module of four additional missions is also available for $25 or, if one prefers, all eight missions can be had for $45, plus the $4 S&H fee. A 386 or better system, 2MB RAM and VGA graphics are required. Though the keyboard is supported, a joystick is highly recommended.



Zone 66

Those desiring to experience one or both of these worthy titles should contact: Epic MegaGames, 10406 Holbrook Drive, Potomac MD 20854 or call (800) 972-7434 to place an order, or (310) 983-9771 for general information. VISA and MasterCard are accepted (MD residents add 5% sales tax).

Well, this concludes our look at shareware titles for the Holidays. Until next time, great gaming and best wishes for a blessed Holiday season!

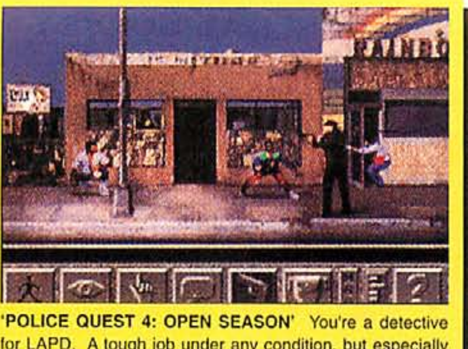
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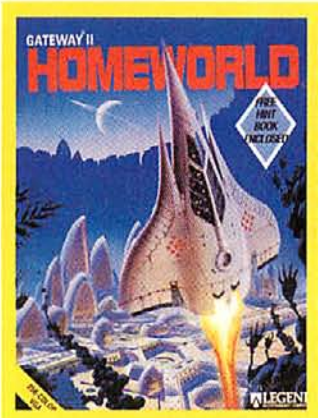
'POLICE QUEST 4: OPEN SEASON' You're a detective for LAPD. A tough job under any condition, but especially now that you must solve a string of random murders. Features digitized background and video captured actors. **$42**



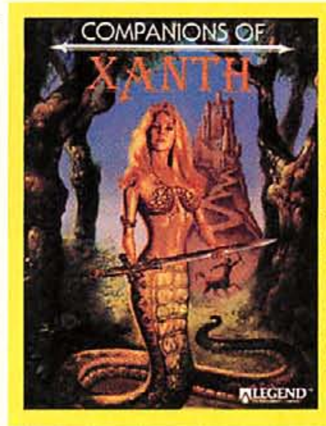
'QUEST FOR GLORY 4' Your challenge is to rid the land of evil by destroying the Dark One himself. When you explore the realm of the undead to find him, wraiths, vampires, and monsters are lurking waiting for your next mistake. **$42**



'ERIC THE UNREADY' is on a madcap quest through this hilarious fantasy world packed with dragons, unicorns and the dreaded Attack Turtles. Cut through a swath of destruction as you unravel the secret of Queen Morgana. Features Hi-Res SVGA graphics.
3.5" **$21**
CD ROM **$36**



'GATEWAY 2: HOMEWORLD' More deep space adventure, more alien encounters, more exotic new worlds & special effects in the continuing saga. Battle a fantastic cult of terrorists & cross the event horizon of a black hole to discover mankind's last hope for survival - the Heechee Homeworld. **$34**



'COMPANIONS OF XANTH' Explore Piers Anthony's magical world of mystic wonders and become a player in a game where the stakes are the existence of magic itself. Interact with Elves, Ogres, Demons, Centaurs, a serpentine Naga princess, and the deadly Gap Dragon. **$36**

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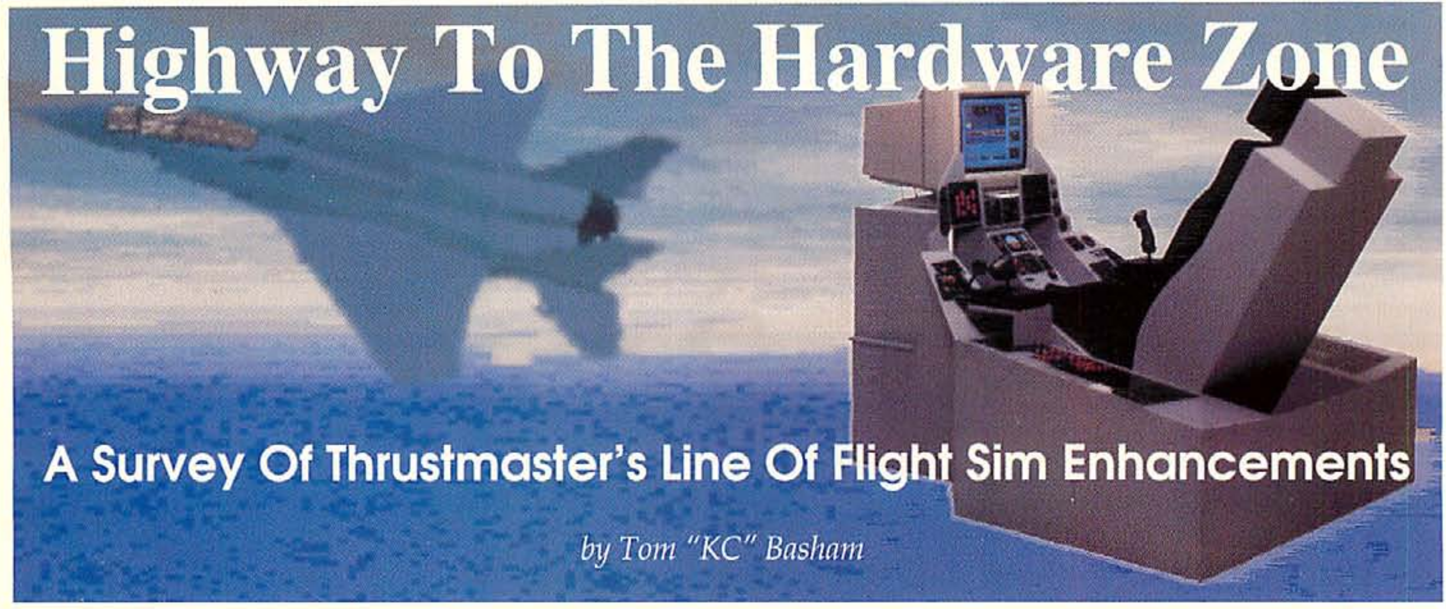
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Highway To The Hardware Zone



A Survey Of Thrustmaster's Line Of Flight Sim Enhancements

by Tom "KC" Basham

Basham is co-author of *Falcon 3.0: The Complete Handbook* and *Dynamix Great Warplanes: The Ultimate Strategy Guide.*

Would-be pilots no longer have to join the military and dedicate years of their lives to training to know the thrill of strapping into a cockpit, planting their feet on rudder pedals, grabbing a flight stick, and kicking in the afterburners. Just as PC-based flight simulations have made great strides in bringing realistic combat situations to the armchair fighter jock, hardware has also kept up the pace so that a large enough payload of external controllers has been developed to make the flight sim experience a more visceral one.

One company in particular has made flight sim hardware Job #1. **Thrustmaster, Inc.** began with a goal: to bring realistic-looking, fully functional throttle control devices to PC flight simulators. From modest beginnings, the Thrustmaster product line has ballooned to include multiple variants of the original throttle control, multiple lines of joysticks, rudder pedals, high-end game cards, and even a full cockpit model!

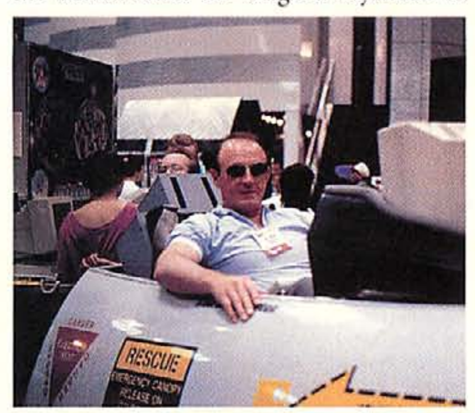
The Throttle Jockey's Dream

The first of the Thrustmaster line, the Weapons Control System (WCS), is loosely modeled after an F-15 throttle and is based on the *Hands On Throttle And Stick* or HOTAS concept. HOTAS designs attempt to place every function a pilot could possibly need during combat on the throttle and stick. In this way, he never has to remove his hands from the aircraft's controls in order to operate radar, weapons, or other critical items. Prior to Thrustmaster products, flight sim users were woefully disadvantaged in this respect and forced to use the keyboard for most functions.

Molded to fit the user's left hand, the WCS has six buttons and a three-position rocker switch mounted on the grip. Three buttons are mounted on the front of the grip and are operated by the user's ring, middle and index fingers. The remaining three switches and the rocker switch are mounted on the side of the grip and are operated by the user's thumb. The WCS has gone through several design modifications, and is now available in three variants: the WCS Mk I, the UPROM upgrade for the WCS Mk I, and the WCS Mk II.

The WCS Mk I

The WCS Mk I is the original throttle design concept. Using a PROM (programmable ROM) chip, users plug their keyboard into the unit, then plug the unit into the keyboard connector of their PC. Based on values stored in the internal PROM, each button is assigned a particular key. Pressing the button sends the assigned keystroke to your PC, just as though you typed it at the keyboard. For example, if the letter "r" was assigned to Button 1, pressing Button 1 would generate a "r" on the computer screen, just as though the user typed it at the keyboard. Since the keyboard plugs into the WCS, it is still totally functional as well. During a game, users may mix keystrokes and WCS button presses freely, so the WCS does not have to be unplugged from the PC when the user wants to do other tasks, such as word processing. The PROM inside the WCS comes factory programmed with preset button assignments for most PC flight simulators. The user configures the WCS for the desired program by setting a bank of DIP switches found along the front of the unit.



"Chief test pilot" Buzz Hoffman enjoys respite between sorties in Thrustmaster's cockpit with fiberglass F-16 fuselage.

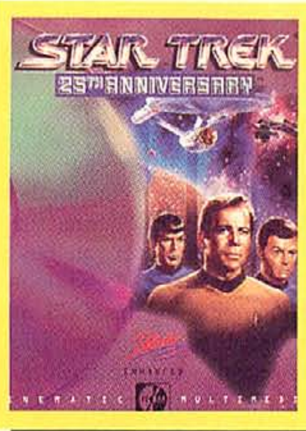
Although made of plastic, the WCS is amazingly stout. During many hours of intense air battles, I often slammed the throttle to either the fore or aft stop extremely hard. Despite abuse at my hand, my original WCS Mk I has survived nearly two years of flight simulating without a single crack.

The Mk I has many advantages. By storing multiple configurations in the PROM, the Mk I can be used with multiple flight simulators. Also, by using user-replaceable PROMs, replacement chips containing configurations for new products can be purchased so the Mk I does not become obsolete. Its largest advantage is the application of HOTAS to flight simulators. Anyone who has ever tired of finger gymnastics across the keyboard while flying *Falcon 3.0* will greatly appreciate the many buttons and switches which can now be within easy reach.

The WCS Mk I does have a few drawbacks, however. First, because game publishers do not adhere to a standard keyboard layout, the PROM will eventually become outdated and

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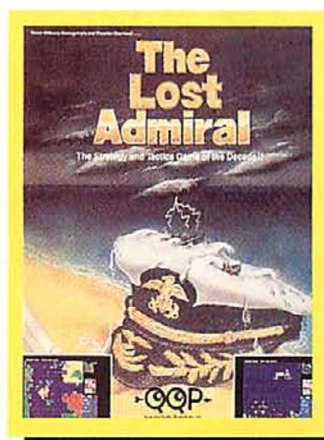
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the user will be forced to purchase an upgrade chip. Also, because the WCS sends keystrokes to the computer, it is possible to overflow the keyboard buffer on some slower computers. For example, on a 386DX-20 running *Falcon 3.0*, pushing the throttle forward causes a series of "=" to be sent to the PC, and pulling the throttle back causes a string of "-" to be sent. At reasonable detail levels, the program does not poll the keyboard buffer often enough for such a slow machine to process all the data, resulting in delays between throttle movements and corresponding throttle changes in the program. Sometimes on slower machines, quickly slamming the throttle will cause the keyboard buffer to overflow and lose the operative characters completely. When this happens, the throttle lever may be pulled fully back, but the throttle indicator in the program will still show 100%. This is usually referred to by sim pilots as "being out of sync."

This problem is most evident on slower machines when the simulation in question uses a pair of keys to increase and decrease throttles, such as *Falcon 3.0*, on slower machines. Programs such as *Red Baron* that use the 1 through 9 keys to step through throttle stages do not have this problem since each position of the throttle lever maps to one of these keys. A slight movement of the lever will resend the key for that particular position and immediately re-synchronize the WCS with the program. Synchronization problems disappear on faster machines. On the testbed 486DX-50, real-time based programs have more opportunities to poll the keyboard buffer, preventing overflows and character losses. In several months of testing on the 486DX-50, the WCS Mk I suffered no synchronization problems with programs such as *Strike Commander* and *Falcon 3.0*.

Finally, I found one other, albeit small, complaint with the WCS. I'm rather tall with long arms and fingers, and found the actual stem upon which the WCS handle is mounted to be a little short. This in no way affects the operation of the device, however.

The WCS Mk I retails for around $80.

The UPROM Upgrade

The next incarnation of the WCS is the UPROM (User Programmable Read-Only Memory) upgrade for the Mk I. Despite the best efforts of Thrustmaster to assign the most effective functions to the WCS buttons, it is impossible to please everyone. Additionally, users grew tired of buying new PROM chips as new products hit the shelves. So, the Thrustmaster Skunk Works designed an upgrade to the Mk I making it fully user programmable.

The UPROM is a replacement chip for the standard PROM in the Mk I. Using the accompanying software, the user can now program each button on the WCS without removing the chip, unplugging the WCS, or using any other specialized equipment. The user specifies the keys they want assigned to the buttons and the chip is programmed through the keyboard interface without any special actions by the user. The upgrade also comes with a stand-alone *Terminate and Stay Resident* (TSR) program that can be used to intercept keystrokes and remap them to user specified keystrokes. For example, using the TSR, users could redefine the entire keyboard, causing the spacebar to generate a "g" and a "g" to generate a backspace.



The WCS Mk II weopons control system is user configurable.

For example, Button 1 could be programmed as the letter "t". The user could then define up to five keyboard remaps using the TSR. In the first remap, the "t" could be remapped to "n", and in the second to a "p". The user then downloads the configuration to the WCS (which takes a few seconds), loads the extremely-small TSR, then executes the program. If the user presses Button 1, a "t" will be sent to the computer. Then, by using user-defined hot keys, the user can activate any of the TSR remaps. If the user then presses Button 1, the WCS will still generate a "t", but the TSR will intercept the "t" and translate it to an "n", then pass the "n" on to the computer. In this way, the UPROM upgrade can be used to assign up to six values for each WCS button within a single flight simulator. I tested the UPROM and its remapping TSR on *Falcon 3.0, Red Baron, Aces of the Pacific*, and several other games under a very complex system configuration using *SMARTDRV* and many different memory managers without experiencing any conflicts.

The good news is that the UPROM is extremely simple to install. Using only a Phillips-head screwdriver to open the case and a small flathead screwdriver to remove the old chip, I installed the UPROM in less than 10 minutes.

The bad news is that the UPROM has two disadvantages. First, only a single keystroke can be assigned to a single button at any one time. The ability to program multiple keystroke macros to a single button would've been nice, but according to Buzz Hoffman at Thrustmaster, the UPROM chip simply doesn't have the capacity to support this. As an option, the remap TSR allows keystroke alternation. You can remap the "t" to be a "p" the first time it's pressed, but a "b" the second time. Repeated pressing of the WCS button would send "pbpbpbpbpb" to the computer.

Second, the UPROM is a volatile memory chip. This means every time the computer is powered down, the custom configuration is lost. So, the gamer must download the WCS anew each time the PC is powered on or whenever switching to a different game. Considering the flexibility gained by using the UPROM at such a low price, most users will find this slight inconvenience perfectly acceptable.

The UPROM retails for $35.

The WCS Mk II

The latest addition to the WCS family is the WCS Mk II. Although it looks similar on the outside to its predecessor, the Mk II has substantial improvements. First, it uses non-volatile memory and, hence, retains its programming even after the computer is turned off. Second, it supports an advanced programming mode that allows the user much more flexibility than the earlier models. Third, it provides additional features which allow programming the joystick buttons.

The user now plugs both the joystick and the keyboard into the Mk II, then plugs the Mk II into the computer's keyboard and joystick ports. Since the Mk II now intercepts both keyboard and joystick lines, it can reprogram either. The Mk II also has a row of five LEDs along the top edge which toggle as various buttons are pushed. Ever wonder when flying in padlock view if the airbrake is on? Assigning the airbrake control to Button 6 will cause LED 3 to toggle on every time Button 6 is pressed. If LED 3 is on, so is the airbrake and it doeesn't require a change in views to confirm it.

Using the advanced programming mode, multiple keystroke macros can be assigned to each button. For example, the user can program Button 4 to send "x n" which, in *Falcon 3.0*, would radar lock a target and automatically interrogate its IFF signal. Also, each

WCS button can be defined based on the position of the rocker switch. If the rocker is up, Button 1 could be assigned "t 6", but if the rocker is in the middle, it could be "u", and if the rocker is down, it could be "a b c".

The Mk II also allows complete programming of the joystick buttons. If one is using, for example, the Thrustmaster FCS (discussed later) for a joystick, the Mk II allows the gamer to program all four buttons and each of the four positions on the coolie hat switch. With a little creativity, a WCS Mk II configuration can be created that allows complete radar, weapons, and view control in *Falcon 3.0,* without the user ever having to remove their hands from the stick or throttle. Now that's HOTAS!

The Mk II also ships with a version of the keyboard remap TSR mentioned above, allowing the user even more programming flexibility! The WCS Mk II retails for $149.

WCS Summary

The WCS is an indispensable utility for flight simulator fans, especially modern jet combat players. Although the original Mk I does have a few rough edges, it is still a better alternative than using the keyboard alone and, once the UPROM upgrade is installed, is extremely flexible and beneficial. The Mk II, though, is the king of the line. Although more expensive, it provides programming capabilities which are limited only by the user's imagination.

The FCS: Moving Into A New Market

When Thrustmaster's resident F-16 pilot, Buzz Hoffman, suggested they build a joystick based on the standard B-8 grip used in most aircraft in the 1960s and 1970s, there was some resistance. It took some time to convince his partners at Thrustmaster that a joystick with all four buttons and a four-position coolie hat switch was worthwhile. Buzz succeeded, and two variants of the *Flight Control System,* or FCS, are now on the market.

The FCS

The standard FCS is a basic joystick frame with a B-8 grip. The B-8 has three buttons, a trigger, and a four-position hat switch. The FCS requires a standard game port that has both joystick 1 and joystick 2 inputs on a single port (most game ports are designed this way). The three buttons and trigger correspond to the four buttons normally available to the two joystick inputs. The hat switch mounted on top of the grip uses the Y-axis of Joystick 2. Depending on the direction in which the sim-pilot presses the hat, one of four resistance values are sent to the joystick port.

Whereas the WCS has to be configured to work with individual programs, the FCS is different. Games, either flight simulators or other games, have to be written to read the second joystick Y-axis and buttons in order to fully utilize the FCS. Older games, such as *Flight of the Intruder* and *Red Baron* were written before the FCS was created, and therefore do not support its additional features. Fortunately, most quality game publishers are well aware of the FCS. Current products from Dynamix, MicroProse, Origin, and Spectrum HoloByte fully support the FCS. However, for products that do not support the FCS, it can be used in conjunction with the Mk II to remap each of the analog joystick buttons to keystrokes the product will recognize.



Pilots will experience more realistic feedback with the increased tension of the Pro FCS.

The FCS has a non-linear response, like that of actual aircraft controls, meaning that the farther the stick is moved in any one direction, the greater control output. For example, with only small movements near the center of the travel, the FCS makes very small signals. At the limits of the travel, however, small movements command very large signals. This gives a much more accurate feel of stick movement versus aircraft response than one gleans from linear-response joysticks.

The FCS has gone through some growing pains. Thrustmaster found that users were doing many things to the FCS during play that they had not expected. The potentiometers were found to wear too quickly, so Thrustmaster replaced them with higher quality components. The grip twisted off too easily, leading to a redesign of the grip's mounting. The shank wore out too quickly where it met the gimbals, so a collar was added to protect the shank. The current rendition of the FCS appears to have overcome these problems.

Fortunately, Thrustmaster's customer support is considered second to none. Thrustmaster's goal is to make their customers happy, and their support department goes to great lengths to meet that goal. Thrustmaster will supply replacement potentiometers free of charge to customers with older FCSs, and in some cases, exchange the older unit for a newer model.

The FCS retails for around $75.

The Pro FCS

The Pro FCS (PFCS) is the FCS's big brother. The PFCS has a metal base instead of the FCS's plastic one, and uses much higher tension springs. To push the PFCS to the gimbal limits, one would have to apply over 20 pounds of force, giving the feel of controlling a real aircraft. While one can move the standard FCS around like any other joystick, it can be a real workout to use the PFCS. After a short initiation period, most PFCS users discover that the increased tension provides physical feedback on the position of the stick. This has the advantage of letting pilots "feel" where the stick is without taking their eyes off the screen to look.

I've flown with a lot of different joysticks, and after using the PFCS extensively, I find it provides the most accurate representation of my experiences in flying real aircraft. Depending on the length of their arm and the height of their computer desk, some users mount the PFCS to the desk to keep it from tipping. The height of my chair and desk allows my forearm to be nearly level when using the PFCS, and I have no problems with the unit tipping.

The Pro FCS retails for $100.

Overall, anyone looking for additional freedom from the keyboard and access to additional buttons on the joystick should find that either the FCS or the PFCS should serve them well. Additionally, those looking for a device with hefty physical feedback should find that the PFCS is the device they're looking for.

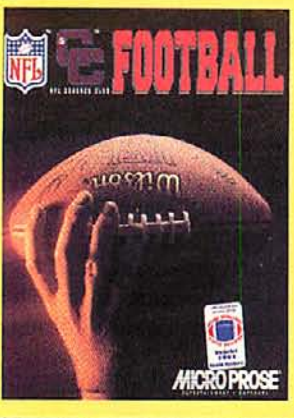
The RCS

Although rudder input is critical to flying most aircraft, few flight simulators provided adequate rudder controls until very recently. Even when rudder control is included, it is usually limited to the keyboard only. Companies producing cutting-edge simulators now support rudder controls on the X-axis of the second joystick port.

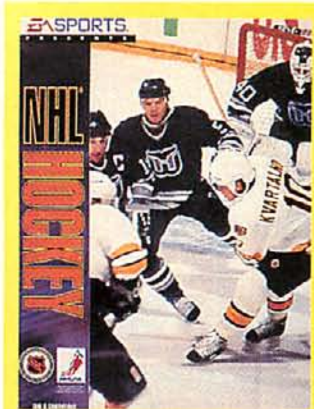
Hardware-wise, there are only two rudder

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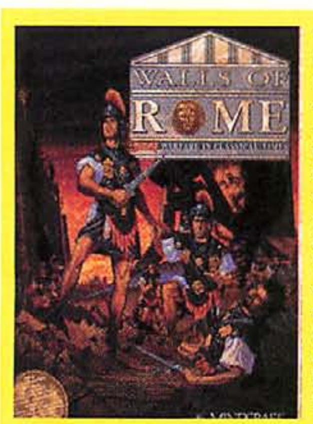
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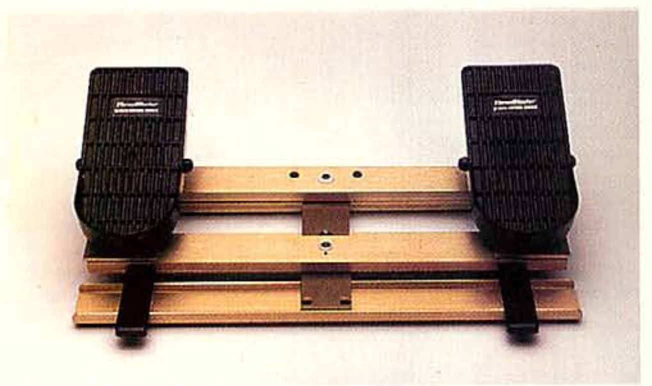
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The RCS rudder control system frees pilot's hands even further from the keyboard.

pedals currently on the market. The Thrustmaster *Rudder Control System*, and the Maxx Rudder Pedals. Although the Maxx sell for only $35, they are molded from some sort of fibrous plastic, their pedals are mounted only a few inches apart, and they have an inadequate physical frame. The Maxx pedals are uncomfortable to use due to their proximity to each other, and are inaccurate to fly with due to the poor physical frame that allows both pedals to be depressed simultaneously.

The RCS, however, are built entirely of metal with plastic foot rests. The pedals are positioned over 12" apart, making them comfortable to use, even for 6'2" people like myself. The foot rests are mounted on parallel crossbars that pivot on a center point, so when one pedal is depressed the other cannot be, like rudder pedals in real aircraft. The unit has a hefty price tag, especially compared to the Maxx, but are built sturdy enough to last a lifetime.

The only defect I found with the RCS I examined was the joystick port connectors. The original RCS units were shipped with a connector plug with a long plastic rim. This rim interfered with the seating of the connector to the game port. Although electrical contacts are fine and the RCS work flawlessly, the connector will come unplugged quite easily. A supply of connectors without the plastic rim have been secured, and I could find no fault whatsoever with the RCS equipped with the newer plug.

The RCS has a retail price of around $120.

The ACM card

With the coming of faster machines running at hotter temperatures, many game cards built for 286 and 386 class machines experience problems in faster 486s. Heat buildup causes the electrical center of the joystick to drift, and older programs can't always handle the higher clock speeds of newer machines. The Thrustmaster ACM card was designed to solve these problems.

Using milspec, 1% tolerance components, the ACM card suffers no drifting problems due to heat buildup, even in high speed 486's. During my testing, a standard generic game card would begin suffering stick drifting on a 486DX-50 only a few minutes after starting a simulation. In sensitive products such as *Falcon 3.0*, the drift quickly became quite annoying and difficult to control, forcing me to recalibrate the stick every three or four minutes. The ACM card, however, performed flawlessly, suffering no visible effects.

The ACM card is also adjustable. A potentiometer mounted on a long cable allows compensation for problems with high clock speeds. Game cards read the resistance generated by the joystick and send a digital pulse to the computer representing the resistance. Many programs, though, were not designed with high speed 486s in mind. Some of these programs do not poll the joystick port often enough, and pulses from the game card are missed, leading to control problems in the game. This problem is not limited to just flight simulators, but to any product running on a low-end machine that uses a joystick.

By adjusting the ACM's port, the user can widen or shorten the length of the pulse generated by the card. By lengthening the pulse width, the program is given more time to read the port and receive the pulse. By adjusting the ACM card's setting, products from the older *Red Baron* to the recent *Strike Commander* all experience no joystick problems on the testbed 486DX-50.

The ACM card has an approximate retail price of $40.

For The Simulator Pilot Who Has Everything...

Rounding out the Thrustmaster line is the massive unit known only as "the cockpit." This is a particle board replica of an F-16 cockpit. For around $700, the base package gives the sim-pilot an item to climb into, with mounts for an FCS (or other joystick), WCS and RCS. The monitor can then sit on a platform where the HUD would normally be. For around $1,200, the package comes with the cockpit frame, plus a padded seat with a head rest, safety harness, and a "switch unit."

The switch unit replaces six of the wooden panels with plastic panels which are replicas of the actual panels from an F-16, and are covered with red push-button switches, tailored for use with *Falcon 3.0*. Every function from IFF, to raising and lowering landing gear, to issuing wingman commands, to operating radar is included on either a push-button or toggle switch.

For another $1,000, one can get a fiberglass F-16 fuselage for the cockpit. Assembly instructions are provided on a floppy disk, and although cumbersome, the cockpit is not difficult to assemble. Thrustmaster recommends two people to complete assembly, but I found the task to require approximately 1.2 people; not hard enough to *require* that extra person, but just hard enough to be a difficult solo job. With three hours and an electric screwdriver, I converted nearly 200 pounds of particle board into a 5' long, 4' wide, and 4' tall replica of an F-16 cockpit. The only thing missing was an ejection seat and Pratt & Whitney F100-200 engine! Be advised, though, the cockpit has no stealth properties, and has had little luck evading Mk I Spousal Search Units!

The Future

Thrustmaster products are quality products designed to greatly enhance the fantasy world of PC flight simulators. The Thrustmaster line is impressive, but the company isn't resting on its laurels. Although they're not letting their secrets out of the bag yet, Buzz Hoffman indicates they have quite an array of new products in the works. Until the new products take flight, however, pilots are advised to remain seated in that particle board cockpit and keep those flight harnesses fastened. CGW



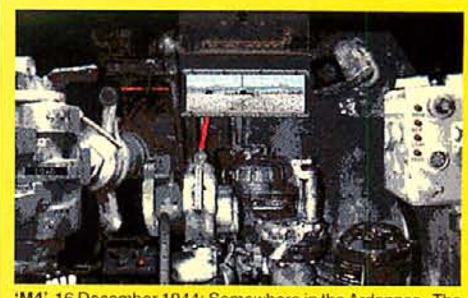
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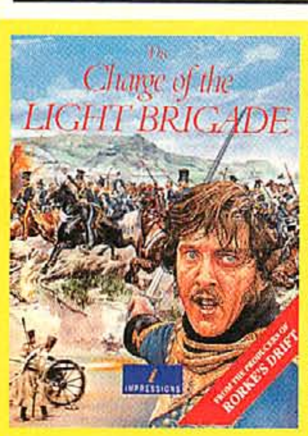
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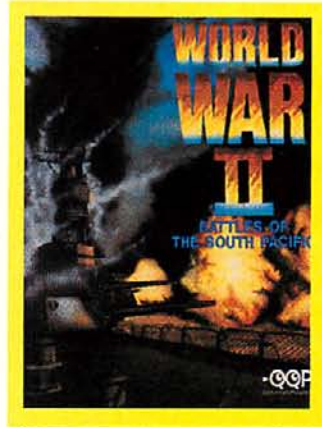
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Circle Reader Service #46



Scorpion's Mail

Serpent Isle ■ Lands of Lore ■ Realms of Arkania
Eye of the Beholder III ■ Crusaders of the Dark Savant ■ Alone in the Dark
Darkside of Xeen ■ Ultima IV ■ Ultima Underworld II

Scorpia Answers Your Questions About Adventure And Role-Playing Games

Ah, my time of year is here at last! It's also Fred's favorite time of year. He just loves those looong winter nights, and he does so look forward to Christmas. Not from any kindly feelings, mind you. It's just that this is when he gets to hang up his traditional Yuletide shrunken head garland. I always have ambiguous feelings about that. The regulars are used to it, but it does make the newcomers a little nervous--especially if they happen to recognize any of the faces.

Speaking of Fred, readers do ask about him sometimes: "Who is Fred?" and "What is Fred?". Of course, I don't tell him about these questions. He's a very private being, and it would upset him to know that people are making inquiries about him. Anyway, Fred is the bartender/bouncer at the Scorpion's Tale. He's half grue and half...well, let's just say that somethings are better left unsaid! You're really much better off not knowing that. Really. Let's get to the mailbags...

Serpent Isle: A lot of players are having trouble getting through the Knight's Test. Most manage to obtain the claw, but are at a loss as to how to get on with it and find the ashes. Of course, there's a secret door they've overlooked. Check nearby walls after a certain assassination attempt. Another big problem for people is obtaining water from the Temple of Tolerance (where you find Mortegro). That's no surprise, since this is the one place you don't fill your bucket at. Remember the little transposition that happened here? Find the missing piece and use the bucket there. (I know it doesn't make sense, but that's how it is.)

Lands Of Lore: Since my original article on this game, some important information has come to light, including news of a nasty bug. Down in the Draracle caves you must rescue Lora and get her to the Draracle before you leave. This has to be done *before* you visit the Draracle, since you only have one chance to see him and can't go back later. If you exit the caves with Lora in your party, the game will crash later on when Paulson tries to join you. Also in the Draracle caves, there are two paths to his lair. Which one you take determines the "gift" you find, and that depends on which serpent eye you use to open the wall. Along one path, it's a silver goblet, and along the other it's a jeweled dagger. Either is satisfactory; you don't need both.

Realms of Arkania: After my *Arkania* article was published, I heard from a reader in Florida about the sword/end game business. He reports that, while you don't absolutely need the sword for the "big fight," you still must have it in your inventory to reach the automatic sequences that end the game (and give you the opportunity to save the party). So, yes, you do have to go out and get it after all. Apologies to anyone who may have been misled earlier, and thanks to Carlos Castaneda for telling me about this.

Eye Of The Beholder III: Several people are having trouble "getting into the temple" in Myth Drannor. That's because they're trying it far too early. Only after you've gone through the Mages Guild and had your little "visit" with the lich will a way into the temple open up. So don't be in such a hurry. You'll get there eventually.

Crusaders of The Dark Savant: Rumors have been getting around about A Really Neat Item in the game. Of course, there are lots of nice weapons and other things to pick up on your way, but I suspect what most people are asking about is the Cane of Corpus. This very specialized (and *very* potent) weapon can be used only by a Faerie Ninja. That's right, a Faerie Ninja. Not a combination that would occur to most people (heh). And then you have to figure out where it is. It just so happens Blindmeis has it. As you guessed, you'll have to kill him if you want the Cane. Just keep in mind that he may not have eyes, but he's no pushover, and neither is the help he calls in. You're gonna earn this one.

Alone In The Dark: Some folks have been experiencing a little difficulty in making it down the length of the picture gallery. If they're not getting hacked by tomahawks in the back, they're being punctured by arrows in the chest. And they say art is good for you. Hah! Anyway, there's a blanket solution for the first problem, but the second requires a different approach. You could almost say you have to give something the shaft (ouch!).

Darkside of Xeen: Somewhat surprisingly, a number of players are having trouble in the southern sphinx with the name needed to get up the stairs. I say surprising, because by this time in the game, it should be evident that JVC is a big Star Trek fan. And with an anagram of only five letters, the answer ought to be obvious with just a little thought.

Ultima IV: Yes, an oldie but very goody shows up again after all these many months (or was that years?). Maybe it's all those gamers who are buying the series on CD-ROM. Whatever, the format might be new, but the questions are classic, including perhaps the most-asked (when *Ultima IV* was new): "Where is that [unmentionable] shepherd???" Why, in Maginicia, of course! Not, however, right inside the ruins. But nearby, very nearby. Think vertical instead of horizontal.

Ultima Underworld II: Folks are still having trouble with those colored paths and pyramid in the void. The idea here is simple (even if doing it isn't). You follow the path to the pyramid. You jump all over it to make it the same color as the path that brought you there, ending at the top. Then you jump through the moongate. Since you have to do this four separate times, the exercise is tedious, but it has to be done.

And that's about it for this look into the mailbag. In the meantime, if you need help with an adventure game, you can reach me in the following ways:

On Delphi: Stop by the GameSIG (under the Groups and Clubs menu).

On GEnie: Visit the Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia to reach the Games RT).

By US Mail (enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you live in the United States): Scorpia, PO Box 338, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028.

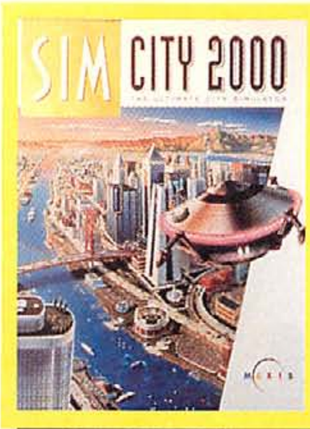
Until next time, happy adventuring! CGW

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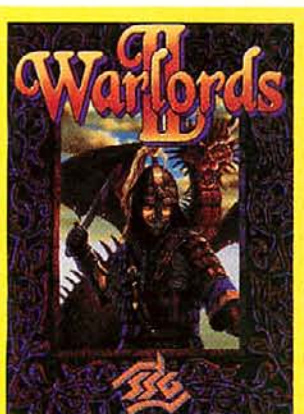
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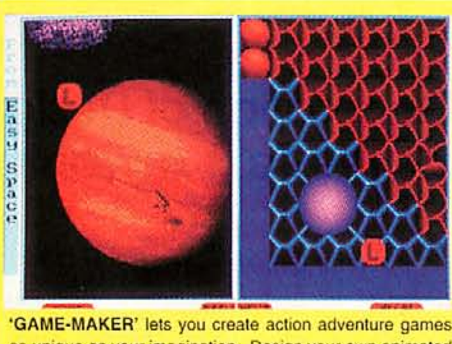
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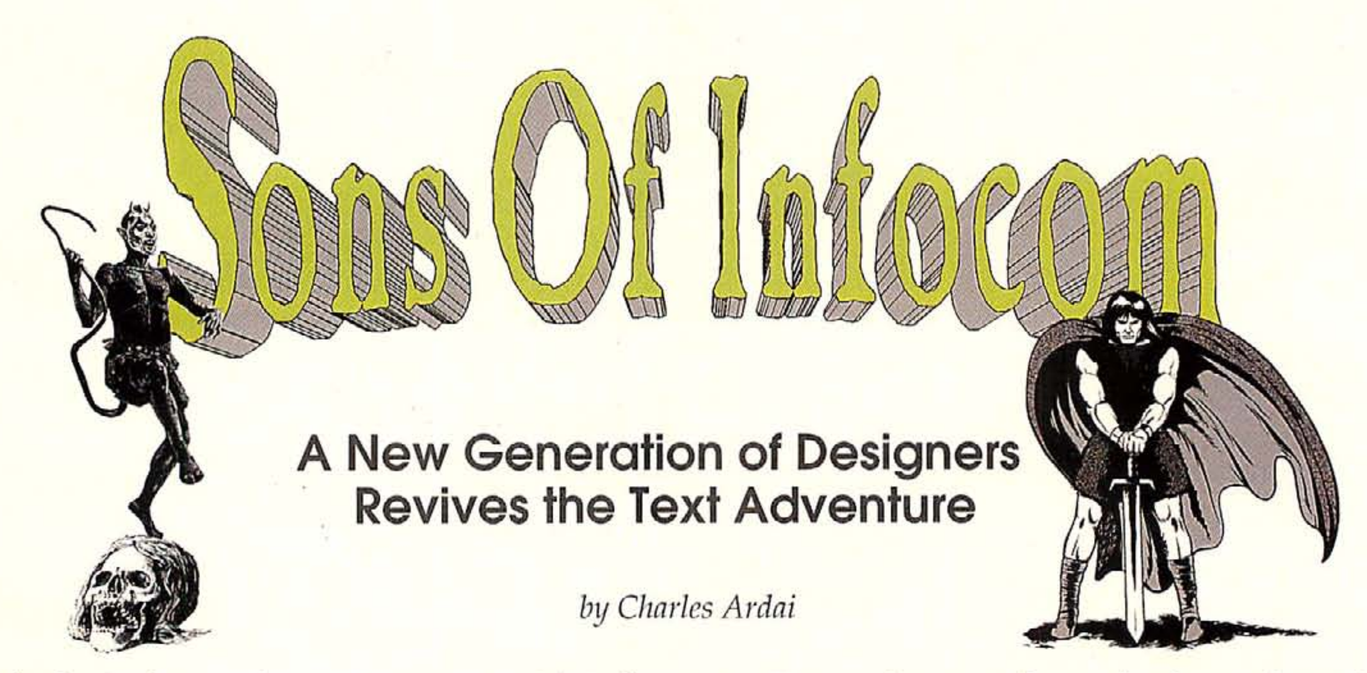
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Circle Reader Service #46



Sons Of Infocom

A New Generation of Designers Revives the Text Adventure

by Charles Ardai

A friend of mine who is a science teacher told me recently about an incident in which one of his students, an adolescent who identified herself as a passionate Star Trek fan, stunned him with the revelation that she had never seen the original series—not even once. To commiserate, I related an encounter I'd had with a young (but not all *that* young) gamer who claimed to be an adventure game afficionado but who could only muster a blank stare when I mentioned Infocom. It turned out that what he meant when he had said "I've played them all" was that he even played *King's Quest I.*

"What about Zork?" I asked.

"Yeah," he said. "I think I've heard of that."

Shall Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot...

Is it possible that there are people reading this magazine who have never played a text adventure? Might there be *CGW* readers who don't even know what a text adventure is? It is hard to believe and painful to contemplate—yet it is the case, more likely than not.

Like tatting, stone-masonry, speaking Gaelic, and mummification, the creation and appreciation of text adventures is a dying art. It is only through the dedicated efforts of game designers like Mike Roberts of **High Energy Software** and D. A. Leary of **Adventions** that the text adventure is getting something of a second lease on life.

True, *The Lost Treasures of Infocom* is available in two volumes, spanning seven years' worth of wonderful titles; and true, Legend has more or less taken the baton from Infocom, producing text-intensive games such as *Gateway* and Infocom veteran Steve Meretzky's *Spellcasting* series. However, the former is more a reanimation (stitched together dead things, *a la* Frankenstein) and the latter more an odd experiment (the stitches here binding multimedia gameplay to an old-fashioned text parser, *a la* Dr. Moreau) than a true resurrection of the form.

What Roberts and Leary are doing, on the other hand, is simply creating new text adventures—old-fashioned, yes, and proud of it, but at the same time raw, energetic, rough-edged and exciting. Both men are shareware authors of some repute, taking their first stabs at conventional commercial success with a new game apiece: *Perdition's Flames* (Roberts) and *Unnkulia Zero: The Search For Amanda* (Leary). Both games are brimming with action and set in colorful, exotic locales, and both might easily have been "graphicked" to the hilt and packed full of snazzy animations—but they're not. Both of these games are text adventures.

One imagines, of course, that more than aesthetics went into the decision to do them as text adventures. Just as many young, solo filmmakers' first efforts are shot in black-and-white due to budgetary constraints as much as to artistic preference, it should not surprise anyone when solo adventure game designers start with all-text games. A state-of-the-art sight-and-sound extravaganza along the lines of a *King's Quest* or a *Day of the Tentacle* might keep a few dozen artists and technicians busy for a year, at a cost of a million dollars or more. In the world of text adventures, by contrast, everyone is equal: the better writer can make the better game—period—regardless of the size of his bank account. (This is especially true when he is working with an extant game creation tool, as these two are. Both games were written using High Energy's *Text Adventure Development System.*)

However, it wasn't just a matter of saving money. Roberts and Leary display too much affection for the genre for that to have been the case. It's clear that they did it for love as well.

To Hell With You

Perdition's Flames is, in several senses, a departure. To begin with, it starts where most other games end, with the line, "You have died." The player doesn't know how or why he has died, nor is it important. All that matters is that he is now on the ferry to Hell, a luxury yacht carrying a milling crowd of the recently deceased. Drinks are on the house, the journey is swift, and when the boat docks, a guide is ready and waiting.

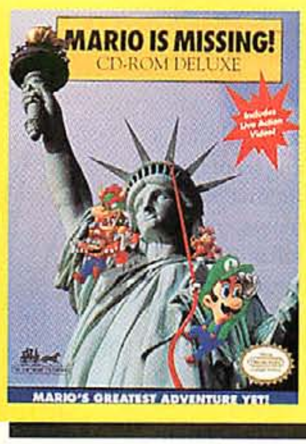
This is Hell? After a fashion, yes. The afterlife has been deregulated, the guide explains, which means that Heaven and Hell now have to compete for



It may look silly but it's a lot cheaper than a 900 hint line.

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souls. The player can choose to go to Heaven at any time.

Why, then, would anyone remain in Hell? Well, they have made some improvements, such that the place now resembles a sorry corner of suburbia more than a nightmare out of Bosch or Dante. As for Heaven, it's never lived up to its reputation. In fact, both halves of the underworld turn out to be pretty dull places. It is the player's job to carve an exciting life out of this eternal banality.

Rather lofty stuff, one might think, and ill suited to the medium—but one would be wrong. *Perdition's Flames* is not the first game to send the player to Hell, but it is the first to offer a non-traditional portrait of the Inferno. Roberts posits an afterlife run by functionaries, something like the Heaven portrayed in movies such as *Heaven Can Wait* or *Defending Your Life*. This makes his Hell an interesting place to explore, as well as sufficiently rule-governed to provide for lots of good puzzles.



In tone, *Perdition's Flames* most closely resembles Infocom's *Bureaucracy* in that the player has to either subvert the system or else spend eternity standing in lines, failing tests, and losing out to more resourceful souls. It is worth noting that many gamers found *Bureaucracy* genuinely, rather than comically, frustrating, and Roberts skates on similarly thin ice when, for instance, he asks the player to solve a calculus-based geometry problem in order to qualify for a driver's license. However, Roberts also turns down the pressure a notch or two through a number of concessions to the player's sanity.

One cannot die in the game, for example, because one is already dead. There is no limit to how many objects one can carry. There is no way to get stuck in a no-win situation. There are no mazes in the game. If all else fails, the game comes with a comprehensive hint book and set of maps.

Strong puzzles abound, including a clever set piece that involves the player's returning to the Earth as a ghost; an interesting set of interactions with a computer hacker; and, for traditionalists, a meeting with a surly troll on a bridge. There is generally only one solution to any given puzzle, but the solution is always a fair one. Roberts' prose serves the player well, giving all necessary information economically, conjuring up the right atmosphere, and only occasionally lapsing into the lugubrious drone the subject matter invites.

On the downside, some of the game's satire is lame, such as the easy digs at politicians and lawyers. The game would also have been stronger if Roberts had put more thought into building the game's vocabulary—the computer doesn't understand such simple words as "break," "kick," "smash," or "raise," or many of the nouns Roberts uses in his descriptions.

Still, *Perdition's Flames* offers a fresh take on a subject that typically gets a hackneyed treatment and a collection of interlocked puzzles that will challenge the hardiest adventurer. If the game's execution is less than perfect, Roberts makes up for it with his sheer originality. In how many other games is it the *right* move for the player to hurl himself into a stream of lava?

More Than Zero

If *Perdition's Flames* comes close to, but just misses, the quality level of an old Infocom game, *Unnkulia Zero* hits the bullseye. Obviously inspired by the G.U.E. saga (and making an homage in its title to one of the late entries, *Zork Zero*), *Unnkulia Zero* is well-written, -plotted, and -designed. With its forests, trolls, lanterns, swords and underground caverns, it could fit right into the *Zork* universe; but Leary has given it a flavor and a history all its own and has peopled it with his own brand of eccentric characters.

The evil Unnkulians have kidnapped Amanda, the betrothed of the Valley King to whom the player, a hulking warrior, has sworn fealty. The King gives the player his quest: find Amanda. The player is booted out of his underground home with nothing more on his person than his trusty sword and a royal insignia ring.

Not to worry: within 20 turns the player will have his hands full...and unlike Roberts, Leary imposes strict limits on how many items the player can carry, making what to keep and what to discard one of the player's ongoing dilemmas. (In Leary's universe, the player can also both die and back himself into dead ends from which the only escape is a quick "Restore." However, like Roberts, Leary mercifully eschews mazes.)

Leary's puzzles are deceptively tricky—a can of snake repellant may appear to solve one's problems with a pesky python, but no such luck. A box of egg substitute found in a monk's kitchen is not, as it turns out, what one has to feed the monk (though it does come in handy later). The problem with some other objects is that they are *too* useful: the handful of berries can certainly serve to quench the player's hunger, but if used in this way they won't be around later when needed to attract a bird of prey.

This particular dead end is nasty but fair. In some instances the game does not play fair, such as when it requires the player to stay in quicksand a turn longer than is intuitively sensible in order to find a valuable object, or when it requires one to keep typing "Dig in burial mound" over and over until the standard "You can't do that" response is replaced with "Fine, if you insist." Most of the puzzles, however, are not unfair, just very tough.

The story established in the opening scene does not unfold so much as evaporate: *Unnkulia Zero* is all about exploring nifty locations and solving puzzles, and only nominally about finding Amanda. Periodically the text (which, incidentally, is even crisper, funnier, and better written than Roberts') re-

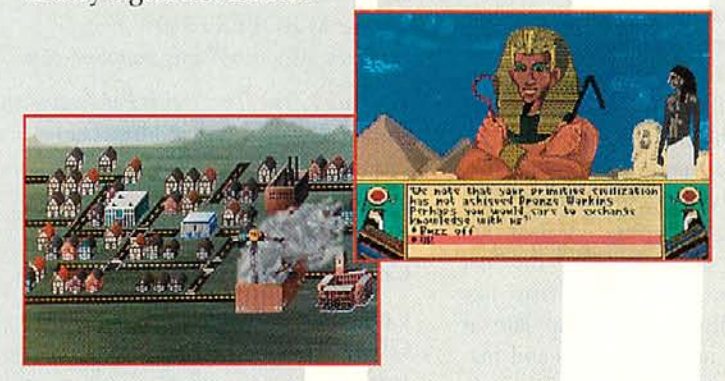


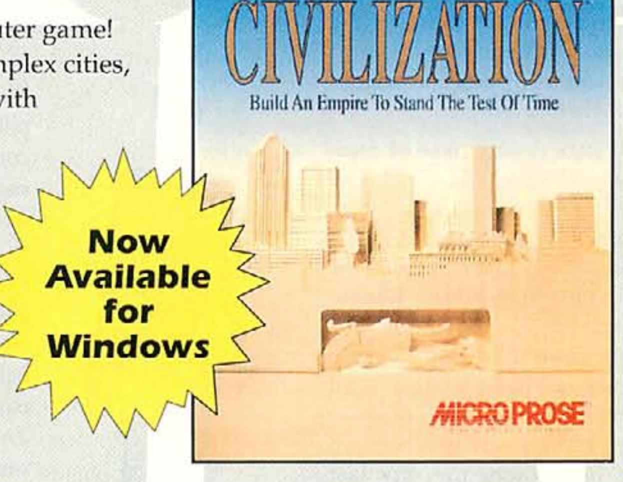
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minds the player about the goal, but Amanda basically has as much to do with the game as the Wizard of Frobozz had to do with *Zork II*. So what does the player have to do, if not look for Amanda? Find and cook a dragon's egg; forge a necklace and bestow it on a nymph; travel through time and shut down a nuclear reactor; and many other wonderful and unrelated things.

The life of a Text Game Designer might be rough, but at least we eat well.

Leary's descriptions of locations, objects, and events are witty and, since he has programmed the game to understand almost any word the player might reasonably want to throw at it, abundant. The game does not come with a hintbook, but the text itself contains subtle clues for those who know how to read between the lines. From the very first scene, it is obvious that Leary has studied the Old Masters and knows what he is doing.

If there is any negative at all to *Unnkulia Zero*, it is that it is too rich in references to earlier, shareware installments in the Unnkulia saga, which most gamers will not have played. Yet even this has its benefits: it makes the world in which the game takes place seem bigger and more fully realized than the typical, generic fantasy setting.

Davids and Goliath

In the shadows of unmerited obscurity, little guys like Roberts and Leary are accomplishing something that other companies, with all their video-capture technology and digitized sound effects, are unlikely to pull off: they are recapturing the thrill of the original Infocom adventures, the ones that were held together with spit and baling wire and seat-of-the-pants creativity. Like the first Zorks, these games taste like something cooked up late at night in the corridors and machine rooms at MIT.

It is a flavor to be cherished. Any young'uns who have not yet had the pleasure owe it to themselves to take a taste of the brew that kept a generation of gamers glued to their screens back in the stone age.

Perdition's Flames is available for $25 plus $2 for shipping. Orders can be placed through High Energy's BBS (415) 493-2420, voice orders (415) 493-2430, or by mail at the following address:

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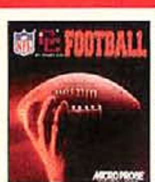
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FoxPro for Windows 2.5 ... 316
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Lotus 123 Windows Release 4 ... 312
Lotus Improv for Windows 2.0 ... 96
MS-DOS Upgrade 6.0 ... 49
Managing Your Money 10 ... 39
Micro Kitchen Companion Windows ... 28
Microsoft Office for Windows 4.0 ... 470
Micro Wine Companion Windows ... 28
Morph for Windows ... 101
Norton Utilities 7.0 ... 117
Paradox for Windows 4.5 ... 146
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Print Shop Deluxe Windows ... 45
Procomm Plus for Windows ... 98
Publisher Windows 2.0 ... 87
QEMM 386 7.01 ... 58
Quattro Pro DOS 5.0 ... 49
Quattro Pro Windows 5.0 ... 49
Quicken for DOS 7.0 ... 42
Quicken for Windows 3.0 ... 42
Rosemary West's House Fortune ... 27
WinFax Pro 3.0 Windows ... 81
Windows 3.1 ... 92
Windows NT 3.1 ... 317
Windows NT Upgrade 3.1 ... 272
Windows Upgrade 3.1 ... 49
WordPerfect For Windows 6.0 ... 282
WordPerfect Vers Upg Windows ... 99
Wordperfect Comp Upg DOS 6.0 ... 121
Wordperfect Version Upg DOS ... 105
Wordperfect for DOS 6.0 ... 296

EDUCATION

A-Train/Construction Set ... 39
AJ World of Discovery ... 28
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Body Illustrated ... 44
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Discover Space ... 34
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GRE w/Cliff Notes ... 28
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KidDesk ... 24
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World Atlas Windows 4.0 ... 44

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Caesar ... 34
Caesars Palace Windows ... 19
Strike ... 39
War II ... 39
VGA ... 19
... 34
... 39
... 33
... 44
... 17
... 50
... 39
... 28
... 34
... 34
... 34
... 19
... 24
... 24
... 44
... 19
... 34
... 34
... 24
... 22
... 25
... 36
... 36
... 14
... 39
acle Hint Book ... 12
entacle: Maniac II ... 34
ght III ... 45
... 28
... 29
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E ll Deluxe ... 28
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Conquered Kingdoms Scenario ... 24
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Dune II ... 29
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Empire Deluxe ... 33
Empire Deluxe Scenario ... 20
Empire Deluxe Strategy Guide ... 12
Empire Deluxe for Windows ... 33
Eternam ... 34
Even More Incredible Machines ... 27
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F-15 Strike Eagle III ... 44
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Falcon 3.0 ... 48
Falcon:Mig 29/Deadly Adversary ... 32
Falcon:Operation Fight Tiger ... 24
FlashBack ... 30
Flight Sim: New York Scenery ... 28
Flight Sim: Paris Scenery ... 28
Flight Sim: Washington D.C. ... 27
Flight Simulator 5.0 ... 42
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Four Play ... 19
Freddy Pharkas ... 38
Freddy Pharkas Hint Book ... 9
Front Page Sports: Football Pro ... 40
Gabriel Knight ... 34
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Geekwad Games of the Galaxy ... 22
Global Dominations ... 34
Gobliiins ... 18
Gobliins II: The Prince Buffoon ... 24
Great Naval Battles Pack ... 47
Great War ... 38
HardBall III ... 36

RECREATION

HardBall III Big League Parks ... 16
HardBall III Player Disk ... 16
Harpoon II ... 48
Heirs to the Throne ... 34
High Command ... 41
Hoyles Book of Game I Classic ... 27
Human's Like You've Never Seen ... 24
Human's: Insult to Injury ... 14
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PUBLISHER: Tune1000
PART #: 31412 WIN
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PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts
PART #: 30674

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Prepare yourself for a casino gaming experience! Includes the 160-page study guide, "Beat the House Companion." Featuring slot machines, black jack, roulette, video poker and craps. Beginners will learn the rules, rituals and terminology of casino play. Seasoned gamblers are schooled in strategic counting techniques as well as profitable betting strategies. One to four people can play against each other, or computer players will fill the empty seats. Anyone can be a High Roller when they know how to "Beat The House!"

PUBLISHER: Spirit of Discovery
PART #30343

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RECREATION

Jack Nicklaus Signature Tour 2	16
Jeopardy with Alex	24
Jet Fighter II	24
Jump Jet	39
Kasparov's Gambit	36
Kid Pix	34
King's Quest V - VGA	24
King's Quest VI Hint Book	9
King's Quest VI VGA *FREE CD*	43
King's Ransom	29
Kingdoms of Germany	34
Kings Table	24
Kye Deluxe	24
Lands of Lore	30
Laura Bow II - VGA	39
Leather Goddesses of Phobos II	39
Legacy Realm of Terror	39
Legend of Kyrandia	29
Legend of Kyrandia Hint book	9
Legend of Kyrandia II	35
Legends of Valour	36
Legends of Valour Hint Book	12
Leisure Suit Larry I - VGA	18
Leisure Suit Larry V - VGA	24
Leisure Suit Larry V Hint Book	9
Lemmings	20
Lemmings II	30
Links: Banff Springs SVGA	19
Links: Belfrey Course SVGA	19
Links: Firestone Course SVGA	19
Links: Innsbrook Course SVGA	19
Links: Mauna Kea Course SVGA	19
Links: Pebble Beach Course SVGA	19
Links: Pinehurst Country SVGA	19
Lost Treasures of Infocom I	28
Lost Treasures of Infocom II	28
Lost Vikings	24
Lost in Time	34
Lure of the Temptress	28
Masters of Orion	34
Mechwarrior II	40
Michael Jordan Flight	35
Microleague BaseBall/Football	28
Microsoft Arcade for Windows	29
Microsoft Space Simulator	44
Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	39
Might & Magic: DarkSide of Xeen	38
Mike Ditka Football	18
Monopoly Deluxe	34
More Incredible Machines	27
More Vegas Games for Windows	18
Mortal Combat	35
NHL Hockey	41
Pacific Strike	47
Pacific Strike Speech Disk	19
Pacific War	44
Patriot	25
Perfect General	34
Perfect General: Great Battles	24
Perfect General: WWII Scenario	22
Pinball Dreams	28
Pirates! Gold	38
Police Quest III - VGA	40
Pool Shark	20
Populous II	27
Power Game Pack II	28
Powermonger	29
Prince of Persia II	39
Privateer	47

RECREATION

Privateer Speech Pack	18
Prophecy	24
Quarter Pole	30
Quest for Glory I - VGA	20
Quest for Glory III	38
Quiz Show Windows	12
Rags to Riches	32
Railroad Tycoon Classic	20
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe	38
Railroad Tycoon Master Hint	15
Reach for the Skies	19
Realms of Arkania	33
Realms of Arkania Hint Book	15
Red Baron - VGA	38
Red Baron Mission Builder	18
Red Crystal	34
Red Storm Rising Classic	20
Return of the Phantom	34
Rex Nebular	39
Rex Nebular Clue Book	12
Road & Track Grand Prix	34
Rome: Pathway to Power	20
Rules of Engagement II	38
Scenery Collection USA East	38
Scenery Collection USA West	38
Secret of Monkey Island II	22
Seven Cities of Gold Comm.	30
Shadow Caster	48
Sid Meir's Trilogy	28
Silent Service II Classic	20
SimAnt for Windows	28
SimEarth Windows	28
SimFarm	28
SimLife for Windows	28
Solitaire for Windows	28
Solitaire's Journey Windows	34
Space Hulk	35
Space Quest IV - VGA	24
Space Quest V	38
Space Quest V Hint Book	9
Spear of Destiny	34
Spear of Destiny Hint Book	12
Spectre PC	24
SportsWorks	27
Star Trek: 25th Anniv. Hint Book	9
Star Trek: 25th Anniversary	34
Star Trek: The Next Generation	45
Stonekeep	45
Strike Commander - VGA	47
Strike Commander Players Guide	12
Strike Commander Speech Pack	16
Strike Commander Tactical #1	20
Strike Squad	36
Strip Poker Pro #1 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Pro #2 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Pro #3 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Pro #4 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Pro #5 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Pro #6 Data Disk	16
Strip Poker Professional	28
Summoning	35
SVGA Harrier	45
Syndicate	36
Task Force 1942	38
Terminator 2029	39
Tesserae for Windows	14
Test Drive III: The Passion	33
Tetris Trio	28
The Dig	39

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RECREATION

The Games: Winter Challenge	31
Tie Fighter Space Combat	39
Tony LaRussa Baseball II	35
Tony LaRussa II: AL&NL Stadiums	20
Tony LaRussa II: Fantasy Draft	14
Tornado	49
Ultima Underworld	22
Ultima Underworld II Hint Book	12
Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth	47
Ultima VII Part 2: Serpent Isle	47
Ultima VII Part 2: Silver Seed	20
Ultima VII: Forge Virtue Add On	18
Ultima VII: The Black Gate	47
Ultrabots	35
Unnecessary Roughness	34
V for Victory Market Garden	41
V for Victory Utah Beach	41
V for Victory Velikiye Luki	41
Vegas Games for Windows	18
Veil of Darkness	35
Vikings: Fields of Conquest	33
WW2 Battles of S. Pacific	34
Walls of Rome	36
Warriors of Legend	20
Wheel of Fortune Deluxe Win.	24
When Two Worlds War	32
Wing Commander Academy	30
Wing Commander II w/Speech	25
Wizardry: Crusader Dark Savant	39
World Circuit Grand Prix	33
World War II: Battle S Pacific	33
X-Wing	39
X-Wing Official Guide	15
X-Wing: B-Wing Tour of Duty	20
X-Wing: Imperial Pursuit	20
Yserbius	24

JOYSTICKS/GAME CARDS

Flight Stick	34
Flight Stick Pro	60
G-Force Flight Yoke	51
GameCard III Automatic	25
GameCard III MCA Automatic	39
Notebook Gameport	40
Pilot Control Stand	20
Thrustmaster ACM Game Card	25
Thrustmaster Flight Control	62
Thrustmaster Pro Flight	102
Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals	105
Thrustmaster Weapon UPROM	30
Thunderstick	24
Virtual Pilot	64

SPEAKERS

AR Partner 22 Speaker Sys.	64
AR Partner 42 Speaker Sys.	129
AR Partner 570 Speaker System	252
AR Partner 622 Speaker System	193
Altec ACS100 Speakers	123
Altec ACS300 Speakers	206
Koss HD-1 Speakers	22
Koss HD-4 Speakers	40
Koss HD-6 MPC Speakers	63
Labtec CS-1000 Speakers	72
Labtec CS-150 Speakers	20
Labtec CS-180 Shielded Speaker	20
Labtec CS-550 Speakers	24
Labtec CS-800 Speakers	32
Labtec CS-900 Speakers	66
Labtec SS-100 Stereo Speakers	18
Labtec SS-700 Speakers	28
Pro Audio 16 Basic	131
Pro Audio Studio 16	206
Pro Audio Studio 16XL	328
Pro AudioSpectrum 16	168



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PUBLISHER: Spectrum Holobyte
PART #: 32546

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PUBLISHER: Interplay
PART #: 31772

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SAN FRANCISCO SCENERY



From San Jose to Marin County and from Napa Valley to the Golden Gate. Photo-realistic real-time ray traced images derived from actual satellite photos and combined with low altitude enhanced polygon cybergraphics. Views so remarkably detailed, so real, it's like looking out an airplane window! Take off and land at a wide variety of airports, all of them complete with runways, taxiways, main buildings, lighting and NAVAIDS. REQUIRES IBM 386/33MHz or higher, MS Flight Simulator 5.0, 4MB, 2MB minimum expanded memory.

PUBLISHER: Mallard
PART #: 31658

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AMAZON TRAIL



Journey through time from the mouth of the Amazon to its lofty sources in the Andes high country. Find the medicinal plant that will save the ancient Incas from extinction and deliver it to the Inca king. Meet as many as 30 other historic explorers, naturalists, scientists, and natives. Exercise problem-solving and reading comprehension skills. Develop navigational abilities. Introduces ecosystems and provides insights into South American history from the time of the Spanish Conquistadors to present.

PUBLISHER: MECC
PART #: 31485

$33

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA



The world's foremost horror story drives a stake through the heart of your PC with this sequel to the blockbuster movie. Enter one of the most amazing worlds ever created and fight for your life as you play Harker, the only man in the world who can stop Dracula in his plan to take yet another mortal soul. Features a first person 3-D perspective, 256-color texture mapped graphics and heart-stopping digital sound effects and musical score. Eerie atmosphere and grotesque monsters, enough to make your skin crawl!

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis
PART #: 32548

$31

OMNI CD UPGRADE KIT



Multimedia Upgrade Kit includes Double-speed CD-ROM drive, Aldus PhotoStyler SE, and QuickCD. Double-speed CD-ROM drive is multi-session photo CD compatible, fully MPC level 2 compliant, CD ROM XA ready and features a 300KB/sec transfer rate, 350ms access time and a 64KB RAM buffer. For use in systems with or without sound cards. Motorized tray-loading, doesn't require a caddy. Supports all PCs and sound cards. REQUIRES: IBM 386sx or above, 2MB, 30MB hard drive.

PUBLISHER: Creative Labs
PART #: 31809

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Flight Stick Pro 60
G-Force Flight Yoke 51
GameCard III Automatic 25
GameCard III MCA Automatic 39
Notebook Gameport 40
Pilot Control Stand 20
Thrustmaster ACM Game Card 25
Thrustmaster Flight Control 62
Thrustmaster Pro Flight 102
Thrustmaster Rudder Pedals 105
Thrustmaster Weapon UPROM 30
Thunderstick 24
Virtual Pilot 64

SPEAKERS

AR Partner 22 Speaker Sys. 64
AR Partner 42 Speaker Sys. 129
AR Partner 570 Speaker System 252
AR Partner 622 Speaker System 193
Altec ACS100 Speakers 123
Altec ACS300 Speakers 206
Koss HD-1 Speakers 22
Koss HD-4 Speakers 40
Koss HD-6 MPC Speakers 63
Labtec CS-1000 Speakers 72
Labtec CS-150 Speakers 20
Labtec CS-180 Shielded Speaker 20
Labtec CS-550 Speakers 24
Labtec CS-800 Speakers 32
Labtec CS-900 Speakers 66
Labtec SS-100 Stereo Speakers 18
Labtec SS-700 Speakers 28

CD-ROM TITLES

CD-20th Century Video Almanac 109
CD-7th Guest 49
CD-Adventures 30
CD-Adventures of Willy Beamish 38
CD-Air Warrior 34
CD-Animals MPC VERSION 55
CD-Arthur's Teacher Trouble 39
CD-B17 & Silent Service II 34
CD-Backroad Racer 45
CD-Bare Assets 54
CD-Battle Chess MPC & DOS 44
CD-Berlitz Japan Alive 109
CD-Berlitz Think & Talk French 99
CD-Better Homes Healthy 46
CD-Bibles & Religion 12
CD-Blue Force 38
CD-Capitol Hill 27
CD-Chessmaster 3000 Window 55
CD-Cinemania Movie Guide 50
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CD-Complete Bookshop 12
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CD-Conspiracy 42
CD-Cookbook Heaven 18
CD-Curse of Enchantia 24
CD-Day of the Tentacle 38
CD-Deathstar Arcade Battles 12
CD-Dictionary of Living World 90
CD-Dinosaur Adventure 42
CD-Dinosaurs! Multimedia Ency. 44
CD-Dragon's Lair 34
CD-Dune 50

CD-ROM TITLES

CD-Eco Quest Search for Cetus 38
CD-Electronic Arts Sampler 5
CD-European Racers 41
CD-F-15 Strike Eagle III 46
CD-Family Doctor MPC Windows 45
CD-Fractal Ecstasy 27
CD-Global Explorer 87
CD-Gobliiins 28
CD-Gobliiins 2 28
CD-Great Naval Battles Pack 44
CD-Guinness Disk Records '93 56
CD-Gunship 2000 w/Scenario 34
CD-HAM Radio 12
CD-Hell Cab 62
CD-Hi-Tech Aircraft 45
CD-Humans
CD-INCA
CD-Indiana Fate
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CD-Jutland
CD-Key Home
CD-King
CD-King
CD-M
CD-MS
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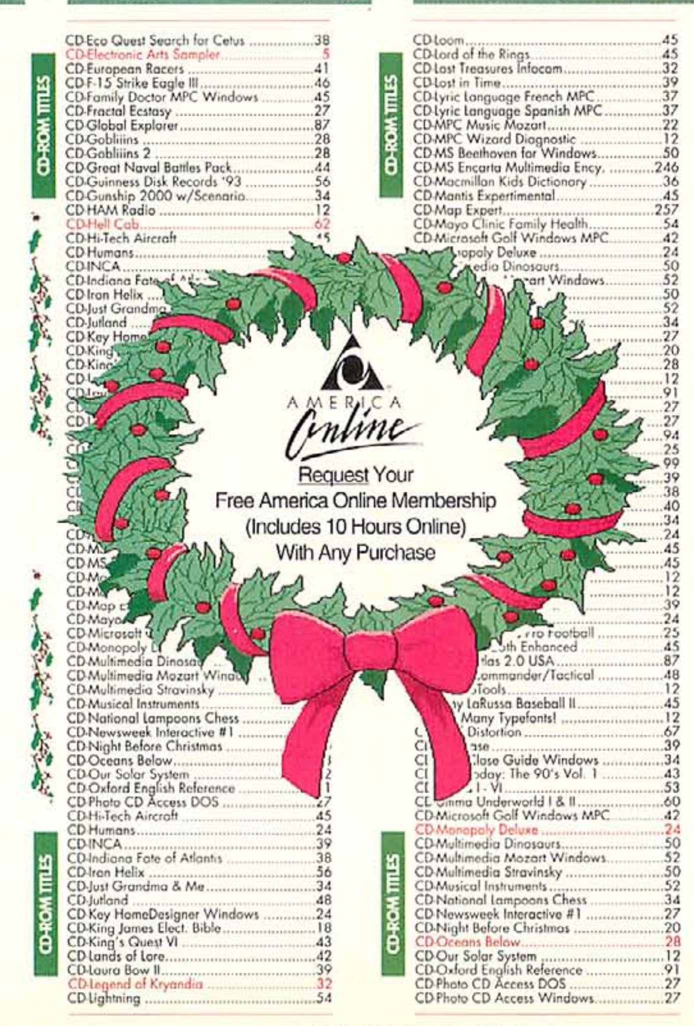
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CD-Humans 24
CD-INCA 39
CD-Indiana Fate of Atlantis 38
CD-Iron Helix 56
CD-Just Grandma & Me 34
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CD-King James Elect. Bible 18
CD-King's Quest VI 43
CD-Lands of Lore 42
CD-Laura Bow II 39
CD-Legend of Kryandia 32
CD-Lightning 54

CD-ROM TITLES

CD-Loom 45
CD-Lord of the Rings 45
CD-Lost Treasures Infocom 32
CD-Lost in Time 39
CD-Lyric Language French MPC 37
CD-Lyric Language Spanish MPC 37
CD-MPC Music Mozart 22
CD-MPC Wizard Diagnostic 12
CD-MS Beethoven for Windows 50
CD-MS Encarta Multimedia Ency. 246
CD-Macmillan Kids Dictionary 36
CD-Mantis Experimental 45
CD-Map Expert 257
CD-Mayo Clinic Family Health 54
CD-Microsoft Golf Windows MPC 42
opoly Deluxe 24
edia Dinosaurs 50
art Windows 52
.... 50
.... 52
.... 34
.... 27
.... 20
.... 28
.... 12
.... 91
.... 27
.... 27
.... 94
.... 25
.... 99
.... 39
.... 38
.... 40
.... 34
.... 24
.... 45
.... 45
.... 12
.... 12
.... 39
.... 24
ro Football 25
th Enhanced 45
las 2.0 USA 87
ommander/Tactical 48
Tools 12
y LaRussa Baseball II 45
Many Typefonts! 12
Distortion 67
ase 39
Close Guide Windows 34
oday: The 90's Vol. 1 43
I - VI 53
ima Underworld I & II 60

CD-ROM TITLES

CD-Microsoft Golf Windows MPC 42
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CD-Street Atlas 2.0 USA 87
CD-Strike Commander/Tactical 48
CD-TechnoTools 12
CD-Tony LaRussa Baseball II 45
CD-Too Many Typefonts! 12
CD-Total Distortion 67
CD-Typecase 39
CD-UFO Close Guide Windows 34
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CD-Ultima Underworld I & II 60
CD-Vacation Planner Gold 30
CD-Where in World Deluxe 53
CD-WinCD Professional 1.1 28
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CD-Wolf Pack 46
CD-World Atlas 4.0 44

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Edutainment Int. Dbl. 16-bit 510
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Fusion CD 16E External 532
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Sony CDU-31A LL/L Mult. Kit 447
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Texel Int. Home Bundle 558
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Texel Int. w/PAS-16 & Cable 558

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PUBLISHER: Hi Tech Expressions
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Professional CD-quality 16-bit stereo sound at a great value. Offers advanced audio technology to enhance business and recreational applications. True 16-bit stereo sound. 16-bit and 8-bit stereo sampling and playback—from 4kHz to 44.1 kHz. 20-voice, 4 operator FM music synthesizer. CD-ROM interface for Creative Labs CD-ROM drives. Includes a joystick port, Monologue for Windows, Creative Wave Studio, Creative Soundo"LE", Creative Talking Scheduler and Creative Mosaic.

PUBLISHER: Creative Labs
PART #: 32529

$130

METAL & LACE



The battle of the Robo Babes. Looking for a game to play? Something fun and exciting, yet sexier than munching dots or pudgy little pointers? Look no further. The gorgeous Robo Babes are expecting you! You can find them on MeCHa Island soaking up the tropical sunshine. They'll give you a welcome you won't soon forget. The Robo Babes even talk! Yeah! Hi-fi stereo cuts. Recommended for mature game players only.

PUBLISHER: Megatech
PART #: 31594

$27

STAR WARS CHESS

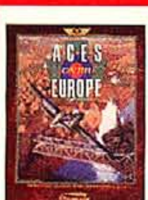


Relive the struggles of the courageous characters from the Star Wars saga in one of the world's oldest games, brought to life in brilliant 3-D animation. As you craft your strategy at each step, you instruct your forces to go forth and do battle. Then, watch as your troops carry out your play — moving into position and fighting battles for territory. Distinctive sound effects and the stirring music of Star Wars. Includes 5,000 frames of hand-drawn cel animation and 72 unique capture animations.

PUBLISHER: Software Toolworks
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From the beaches of Normandy to the war-torn ruins of Berlin. Fly with the U.S. Army Air Force, the R.A.F., or the German Luftwaffe. An accurate and detailed Great War Planes simulation. Experience the intensity of aerial combat in the European Theater of WWII as you patrol the front lines, target supply depots and come face-to-face with moving ground targets and fortified artillery bunkers. Fly more than 20 aircraft in historical campaigns. It's an all-new battle covering land, seas and skies.

PUBLISHER: Sierra
PART #: 28445

$44

JOE & MAC: CAVEMAN NINJA



Millions of years ago, before the "Big Freeze" covered our planet's deserts with ice, a caveman's life was not an easy one. Although this was the only lifestyle known to Joe and Mac, it still had its good side. There was lots of berry juice, dinosaurs, and cave girls to amuse them. Then, one moonlit night, some unfriendly neighbors wrecked their village and kidnapped their women. They're alone in the wilderness, and Joe and Mac are the only cavemenavailable to rescue them. Includes free "Jurassic" eraser.

PUBLISHER: Broderbund
PART #: 32401

$17

LEMMINGS HOLIDAY

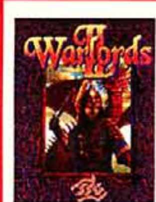


Those seasonally spirited Lemmings are on the move! Due to popular demand, Psygnosis delivers 32 levels of your favorite Lemmings holiday gameplay. Bring the Lemmings home safely for the holidays as you guide them through their winter wonderland in an all new series of adventures. The humorous and challenging gameplay and of Lemmings takes a winter vacation with the 32 levels of Santa-clad Lemmings climbing, digging, and building through an animated Lemmingland winterscape.

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis
PART #: 32545

$13

WARLORDS II



The sequel to the highly addictive, hugely successful, award-winning Warlords. Now you have more worlds to conquer, more mighty armies to make, and more enemies to vanquish. New magical items and abilities. Hi-res graphics and backed by a full sound track. Features include random worlds for infinite playability, mysterious hidden maps, exciting and dangerous quests, and exotic army types. Contains 640x480 VGA graphics and sound board support.

PUBLISHER: SSG
PART #: 31521

$38

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Sound Blaster 16 MCD ASP	183
Sound Blaster 16 SCSI-2	164
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SoundMan 16	105

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A-Train w/Construction Set	39
American Civil War III	28
American Heritage Dictionary	33
Battle of Britain 2	34
BestBooks	51
Bomber 2	28
Business Planner	25
CA-Cricket Draw III	84
CA-Cricket Graph III	84
CA-Cricket Presents 2.1	84
CD-7th Guest	55
CD-A Hard Days Night; Beatles	25
CD-Better Homes Health Cooking	46
CD-Capitol Hill	27
CD-Dracula Unleashed	54
CD-Iron Helix	57
CD-JourneyMan Project	55
CD-Just Grandma & Me	33
CD-Myst	58
CD-Photo CD Access Macintosh	27
CD-PhotoEdge Color	94
Caesar	34
Caesars Palace	20
Carriers At War	39
CheckFree MAC	5
Christmas for Macintosh	12
Chuck Yeager Air Combat	35
Civilization	44
Cogito	34
DinoPark Tycoon	34
Dinosaur Adventure	25
Disney Collection Screen Saver	28
Eight Ball Deluxe Pinball	34
Falcon MC	39
Flight Simulator	42
Freddy Pharkas	38
Golf Companion	24
Indiana Jones Fate of Atlantis	34
Key CAD Complete	24
Kid Pix 1.2	34
King's Quest VI	43
Legend of Kyrandia	34
M.Y.O.B Accounting 3.0	104
M4 Sherman Tank	34
Mario Teaches Typing	28
Micro Kitchen Companion '94	30
Monopoly	18
Morph	84
Odell Down Under	34
Pathway into Darkness	36
Pax Imperia	39
Quicken 4.0	42
Railroad Tycoon	39
Ready, Set, Read	27
Rex Nebular	39
Score RX for ACT at Home	59
Score RX for SAT at Home	59
Shoebox Image Manager	99
Sierra Award Winning Bundle	45
SimAnt	28
SimCity Classic	22
SimEarth	28
SimLife	39
Spectre	34
Sportster 14.4 EXT-MAC&FAX	218
Star Trek 25th Anniversary	34
Star Trek Screen Saver	34
Stellar 7	20
Strip Poker Professional	28
Treasure MathStorm!	33
Tristan MAC LC/MAC II	18
Uncharted Waters	34
V for Victory III: Mkt. Garden	42
V for Victory Velikiye Luki	41
Wheel of Fortune w/Vanna White	28

STOCKING STUFFERS

3D Pinball	10
AHS-10 Headset Sound	34
AM-10 Microphone Sound	19
CD Bibles & Religion	12
CD-Caddy	7
CD-Clipart Goliath	12
CD Deathstar Arcade Battles	12
CD-Photo CD Access Windows	27
CD-Shareware Overload	12
CD-Too Many Typefonts!	12
Computer Cleaning & Vacuum Kit	20
DataLife 10 Pk HD 3.5" Disks	12
Dr. Wong's Jacks/Poker Windows	10
Drive Cleaning Kit 3.5" #CK-5	9
Keyboard Calculator #KC-1	9
Labtec AM-22 Microphone	12
Labtec CDR-12 CD Lens Cleaner	12
Mouse Cleaning Kit #MC-1	12
Mouse Pad #MP-1	7
Tool Kit 11-Piece TK#1	19

GIFT GIVING IDEAS

Betty Crocker Cookbook DOS	22
Betty Crocker Cookbook Windows	22
CD-Night Before Christmas	20
Calendar Creations Baseball	39
Calendar Creations Dogs & Cats	39
Calendar Creations Exotic Cars	39
Calendar Creations Impressions	39
Calendar Creations Nature	39
Calendar Creations Oceans	39
Dynapulse 200M Health System	110
Edutainment Int. 16-bit Dbl.	510
Flicks	34
Front Page Sports:Football Pro	40
Fusion CD 16 (Internal)	463
Gift Certificate $100	100
Gift Certificate $50	50
Golf Companion for Windows	24
Hardball III Diamond Collection	40
Micro Kitchen Companion DOS	28
Micro Kitchen Companion Window	28
Miracle Piano System MAC	329
Miracle Piano w/FREE Song IBM	288
NHL Hockey	41
News of the Past	30
Print Shop Deluxe Windows	45
Pro AudioSpectrum 16	168
Star LS-5 Laser Printer	672
Star NX-1040 Rainbow 180CPS	157
Star Starjet SJ-48 Ink Jet	269
Star Trek: The Next Generation	45

SEGA/SNES

4-Way Play Adapter SEGA	29
Bubsy in Claws SEGA	53
Bubsy in Claws SNES	62
Cool Spot SEGA	50
Dungeon Master SNES	64

SEGA/SNES TITLES

Final Fight 2 SNES	60
John Madden NFL '94 SEGA	46
John Madden NFL '94 SNES	49
Jungle Strike SEGA	55
Jurassic Park SEGA	41
Megadrive Adaptor SEGA	20
Mortal Combat SNES	63
Mutant League Football SEGA	46
NHL '94 SEGA	44
NHL '94 SNES	46
Shining Force SEGA	55
Street Fighter II SEGA	63
Street Fighter II SNES	61
Super Off Road Baja SNES	52
WWF Royal Rumble SNES	63
X-Men SEGA	42

BUNDLEMANIA VALUES

AD&D:Eye of Beholder Trilogy	47
Air Combat Classics	39
Berenstain Bears Fun LunchPak	24
CD-Strike Commander/Tactical	48
Comanche/Mission 1 & 2 Bundle	87
Falcon 3.0/Mig 29 Bundle	76
Flight Sim 5/Paris & New York	92
HardBall III Diamond Collection	40
MechWarrior/BattleTech I & II	19
Micro Kitchen/Betty Bundle DOS	45
Micro Kitchen/Betty Bundle WIN	45
QEMM 386 Game Pack 7.0	67
Power Game Pack II	28
Sierra Dynamics Bundle - VGA	39
Strip Poker Pro & 1-6 DataDisk	115
Thrustmaster Flight/Rudder	160
Wing Commander II w/Speech	25
X-Wing/B-Wing Bundle	55

HARDWARE

FanCard Version II	30
IPS-360 GPS Navigation System	459
Microsoft Bus Mouse 2.0	80
Microsoft PS/2 Serial Mouse	82
Practical PM14400FXMT EXT F/M	217
Pro Movie Studio	343
Sony PIX-100 CD-ROM XA Player	857
Sportster 14.4 EXT Fax/Modem	199
Sportster 14.4 INT-Fax/Modem	171
Star LS-5 Laser Printer	672
Star NX-1040 Rainbow 180CPS	157
Star Starjet SJ-48 Ink Jet	269
VGA TV Elite	263

PRODUCTIVITY

Access Comp. Upgrade 1.1	145
Access Version Upgrade 1.1	15
Access for Windows 1.1	319
After Dark for DOS	27
After Dark for Windows 2.0	27
AutoMap 3.0	54
AutoMap Europe Windows	34
AutoMap Ski Resorts Windows	24
AutoMap Upgrade 3.0	24
AutoMap Windows Upgrade 3.0	24
AutoMap for Windows 3.0	55
Betty Crocker Cookbook Win.	22
CA-Clipper Comp. Upgrade 5.2	142
CD-Photo CD Alaska	39
CD-Photo CD Animals	39
CD-Photo CD Auto Racing	39
CD-Photo CD Butterflies	39
CD-Photo CD Fireworks	39
CD-Photo CD Japan	39
CD-Photo CD Porsche Racing	39
CD-Photo CD Sailboats	39
CD-Photo CD Underwater	39



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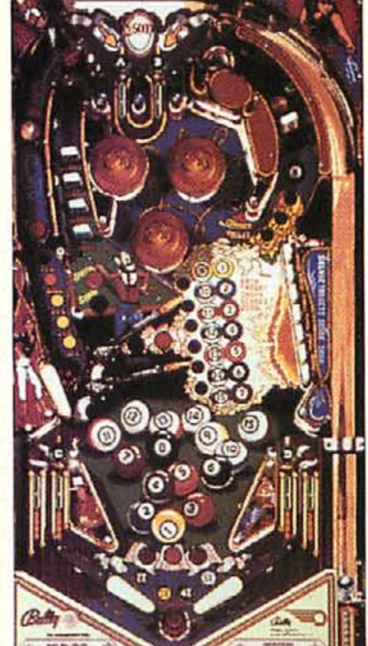


A Rich Harvest of Pinball Games Will Feed Flipper Fingers All Winter Long

By Chris Lombardi

CRACK!!!!!! Ahhh, yes. That satisfying knock on wood that signals "Free Game." That, or you've won the Pinball Lotto and made a Match. Either way you know that Man has bested the Machine and there will be no "Insert Coin" this time around.

Pinball and such feelings of pinball have been around for as long as most people alive today. Since their invention in the early 20s, they've endured a long, roller-coaster history. Reaching an apex of popularity in the 50s and 60s, they were immortalized in song by The Who's "rock opera" *Tommy* during the 70s, only to find themselves relegated to a lonely corner when usurped by *Asteroids* and friends in the early 80s. But video games never quite killed off the pinball machine, and over the last few years they've enjoyed a small resurgence in popularity. Alongside the *Street Fighters* of today's arcade, one can find, or rather, can't miss, the ostentatious new generation of machines that blare sound effects and flash lights, boast multiple tiered levels, bizzare contrivances, and a spaghetti-configuration of ramps and rails second in design perversity only to an L.A. interchange. This overstated appearance has apparently met the market demand, as these games can once again draw a small crowd of Pinball Wizards, eager to pump their warm, sweaty quarters into welcoming maws.



Pinball is making a comeback in the computer gaming realm as well. With game companies on the hunt for light and addictive games to reach the computer-using mass market and their mass dollars, a flurry of pinball game releases is not wholly unexpected. And a flurry is what we have this Winter '93 with four recent pinball releases and a few more on the horizon.

Player #1 — Eight Ball Deluxe

Eight Ball Deluxe comes to us from **Amtex**, a company that does pinball and nothing but pinball. Their first release, *Tristan*, was an excellent simulation with a very realistic feel, earning it several awards from the press. *Eight Ball Deluxe* is their second release and is a licensed re-creation of Bally's arcade machine of the same name.

Upon opening the *Eight Ball Deluxe* package, one gets the sense that the Amtex people truly love their work. The game comes with a real flipper and ball, and an excellent manual that covers general pinball technique, the specific features of the machine, and notes from a pinball Pro.

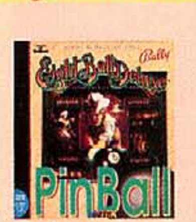
The main interface screen is a digitized image of "Pinball Cafe," inhabited by the *Eight Ball* machine and a cowgirl with snug Levi's and digitally enhanced lipstick. Selecting the chalkboard, one can see the top 10 scores of all time, and a click on the "backglass" of the machine enables one to customize the playfield slant and bumper voltage. Sadly, the cowgirl is not interactive.

The machine itself is a sight to behold. The original coin-op machine beautifully depicted a dim cowboy bar scene, with surly Marlboro men and nymph-like cowgirls. Amtex's digitized version accurately recreates the art, sounds and digitized speech of the original. "Quit talking and start chalking!" demands the cowboy/pool shark, and the game is underway....

Amtex's *Tristan* was a full-screen machine, meaning the entire playfield was in view at all times. Amtex elected to use a partial, scrolling view for *Eight Ball Deluxe*, and I was initially disappointed with the choice. With a partial view, the player cannot see the targets at the top of the machine and has to guess at his shots. I learned to live with it and eventually came to like it. After investing several hours, one gets a feel for the shots and can get very accurate in their placement. Now that I'm accustomed to the magnified partial view and the silky-smooth screen scrolling, the static full-screen of *Tristan* feels like a step back.

As far as the design of *Eight Ball Deluxe* playfield goes, it is a fairly standard, meat n' potatoes set up: three flippers, three bumpers, a

Eight Ball Deluxe



TITLE:	Eight Ball Deluxe
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEMS:	IBM, Macintosh
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 386SX or better, 2MB RAM for sound, VGA graphics, 4MB hard drive space; Sound Blaster sound card supported. Mac: Mac II/LC/Quadra/SE 30/Powerbook/Duo/CEntris, 4MB RAM, 12" screen, System 6.0.7 or higher
# OF PLAYERS:	1-4
PROTECTION:	Serial Number look up on installation
DEVELOPER:	Amtex Software
DISTRIBUTOR:	Broderbund Novato, CA (800) 521-6263

Take A Break Pinball For Windows



TITLE:	Take A Break Pinball For Windows
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM with Windows 3.1
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 6MB hard drive space, Windows 3.1
# OF PLAYERS:	1-4
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Scott Wallin
PUBLISHER:	Sierra/Dynamix Coarsegold, CA (800) 326-6654

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Silverball



TITLE:	Silverball
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX or better, VGA graphics, 2MB hard drive space; Sound Blaster (Pro) and Gravis Ultra Sound sound cards supported
# OF PLAYERS:	1-4
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	Epic MegaGames
PUBLISHER:	Microleague Interactive Software Newark, DE (800) 334-6572

Pinball Dreams



TITLE:	Pinball Dreams
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 386-20MHz or better, VGA graphics, 3MB hard drive space; AdLib, Gravis UltraSound, Sound Blaster and Roland sound cards supported
# OF PLAYERS:	1-8
PROTECTION:	Serial number look up on installation; limit of 3 installations before disks are unusable
DEVELOPER:	Spidersoft Limited
PUBLISHER:	21ST Century Entertainment P.O. Box 415 Webster, NY 14580 (716) 872-1200

bunch of drop targets, and a drop hole. It's fun, but tough. The skill-shots are skill-shots, and the ball has a great affinity for the side alleys. To score well, one must use the "nudge" features often. Like *Tristan*, *Eight Ball* allows the player to simulate "body english" or the pelvic bumps and side-to-side jiggling that goes on with real machines. *Tristan* had one nudge option—one that simulated a simple, straight-on pelvic thrust with a jerk of the screen. *Eight Ball* adds two others, a 45-degree right and left nudge. These can be used quite liberally, as the Tilt mechanism is laughably forgiving.

Eight Ball Deluxe is a gorgeous, playable and realistic program. Of all the programs considered here, it is the connoisseur's choice. It's only weakness, when compared to the other packages surveyed, is that it offers only one machine. You're dropping six rolls of quarters for one game, while every other package in this survey contains four or more, and for a roll less. If you're the type who would rather enjoy one very fine bottle of wine over four or more bottles of medium quality, *Eight Ball Deluxe* is your fine vintage.



Eight Ball Deluxe

Player #2 — Take A Break Pinball

Microsoft said "it couldn't be done" when Dynamix approached the programmers of Windows about a pinball game for that operating system. Microsoft said that a pinball game would ask more of Windows than it could deliver. It took several years of hard work (a lot longer than they had expected), but Dynamix proved them wrong with *Take A Break Pinball. Take A Break* is a collection of eight, full-screen pinball machines that draw upon the works of Sierra/Dynamix for their themes. Leisure Suit Larry, Willy Beamish, Roger Wilco, King Graham, Draxon of Nova 9—the Sierra/Dynamix Who's Who—are all subjects of one or more of these games.

The machines are all colorful and occasionally original in their designs, and are dressed in a panoply of animations, sounds and extra graphic pizzazz. Each machine spans the length of the screen and has a quarter-screen window that displays graphics corresponding to the happenings on the playfield. There is also a "Silent Radio" box where text scrolls by during play.



Take A Break Pinball

The machines' "scoring opportunities" are structured after the adventures upon which they are based. "Planet Pinball: Level Two," for example, follows the deeds of Roger Wilco in *Space Quest IV*. If a ball is sunk in the Buttes of Estros trap hole, a Pterodactyl will swoop down and ferret-away the ball in its nest. Sink another ball in the Buttes and the Sequel Police arrive, but the pterodactyl will swoop down again and throw the cops off of the board. This earns a million points and releases the other ball for Multiball play. The machine has three other "objectives" like this that generate their own graphic rewards.

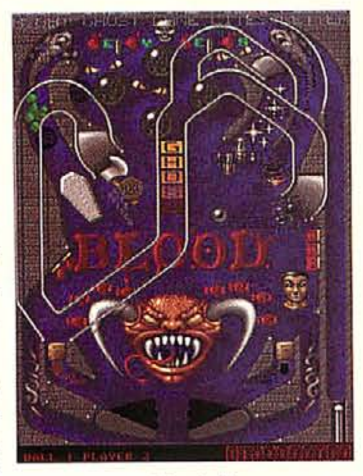
"Quest For Daventry," is based upon the best-selling *King's Quest V*. Though it too has its graphic cuteness—an animated yeti will pick up the ball and drop it into the sea, and a secret island will rise up out of the water to expose a special target—the machine is actually a bit drab. The targets are unimaginatively placed along the sides of a wide-open and empty center field.

"Larry's Big Score" is based upon the exploits of Leisure Suit Larry and contains the sophomoric sexual humor we've come to expect from him. In case the player has missed them, the Silent Radio message insist that one "check out [Passionate] Patti's bumpers." Patti's bumpers are exactly where one might expect them—though perhaps just off-center enough to molify a Sierra exec. Taking the humor to yet a lower level, the large Megatron-Million light is close enough to Patti's "groin" to communicate the intent. But the machine holds other interest beyond the prurient kind. With its looping "Amass Class" ramp, several bumpers, and third flipper at the top, it is a fun machine to play, even though the play is a bit "unbalanced." This imbalance is a result of the designers' humor getting away from them. While one has to hit the three L-U-V and Sax, Spies and Videotape Targets, and then hit Patti's bumpers 10 times to score a million points, one can get the same million points each time one hits Patti's "G-Target"—a not-so-subtly named spot that is (contrary to popular belief) quite easy to hit.

"Flipped Out Willy" has the manic coloring scheme and general feel of an amusement park. A wheel lies in the dead-center of the machine that, when spinning, can throw a ball in unpredictable directions. The high scoring opportunities follow the plot of the Dynamix adventure game, from the Escape From School under the wheezing nose of a sleeping teacher, to Giving Leona a Swirlie, exposing her evil waste disposal plans.

The other machines, "Draxon: Levels One and Two," and "Planet Pinball: Levels One, Two and Three" can't be described in detail here, but suffice to say that they range in interest and each have special features, the most notable of which is in "Draxon Two," where the player can load a ball into a gun and fire the ball into the nostrils of the Bad Guy, Gir Draxon. Two nostril shots and Draxon breathes no more, and the game is "beaten."

Structuring the machines like adventure games lends them charm, especially for those who've played the adventures. But, unfortunately, all of these graphic and sound extras carry a huge CPU overhead. On even the fastest of computers, the action bogs down to the point of frustration. It can be so bad as to be unplayable on a 386, and irritating on a 486.


Silverball

Beyond this speed problem, the general feel of the pinball mechanics is realistic for the most part. Dynamix does cheat a bit with some of the special machine effects. If a ball begins up a ramp, it's going to continue up the ramp, even though one's innate physics sense says that the ball doesn't have enough momentum to make it. Like many of these pinball packages, the game offers a "nudging" feature, although Dynamix' calls it "grunching." You can grunch by pressing <Ctrl> and <Shift> at same time. Rather than jostling the screen to simulate body english, grunching simply pulls the ball in the desired direction. It doesn't really give the feel of a bump, but rather feels as if one were briefly using a strong magnet on the ball. Of course, too much grunching and it's Tilt Time. *Take A Break* seems to have the most sensitive Tilt mechanism of the bunch.

The final score shows Dynamix entering its three-letters on the Top Ten list, but only for those players with a high-end, Windows-accelerated machine. While Dynamix has proven Microsoft wrong by creating realistic pinball action in Windows, they have, in a fit of over-enthusiasm, overloaded Windows' capabilities with all of the graphics and animation. Those with super-machines will appreciate the abundance, but those who still compute in the 386 realm must seek out a DOS-based game.

Player #3 — Silverball

MicroLeague's brand of pinball is not necessarily realistic, but it is fast, colorful and high-scoring. Its four machines vary widely in style and mechanics. The machines are squat—at about a 1:1.5 length/height ratio— and the player sees about half of the machine at a time, with the screen scrolling very smoothly with the ball. The ball's action is a bit strange: it behaves more like it was made of dense rubber than steel, and is small compared to the rest.

The best machine of the bunch is "Fantasy." Set in the realm of role-playing, the ultimate object is to wake the dragon that lies in the center of the playfield. If the game is styled after a role-playing game, then it is a "monty haul" role-playing game, where the players earn ridiculous amounts of gold and experience for everything they do. In "Fantasy" one can earn a million points without trying, and it's not rare for a good player to earn scores in the hundreds of millions.

On the other end of the scoring spectrum is "Snooker Champ." This is a low scoring game set within the realm of English billiards. Even with the hyper-active ball, this game plays at a casual pace and can be a tad boring. But perhaps its subtlety is lost on a Yank unfamiliar with the English (per)version of Pool.

"Blood" and "Odyssey" both contain looping ramps and rails. "Odyssey" is based in the ancient Grecian myths and has a few unique features, including a miniature third flipper used to shoot the ball up a ramp, and dangerous flipper ramps that make "cradling" the ball a touchy affair. Repeated trips through the looping ramps will build and launch the hero's sky ship and eventually lead to the destruction of the Minotaur. "Blood" carries a cyber-horror theme and has a network of three "overhead" rails.

Like *Eight Ball Deluxe*, the machines in *Silverball* can be tweaked. One can both modify the playfield slant and choose between three and five ball games.

In the final tally, *Silverball* ranks high for those who don't mind the unrealistic ball action. At least two of the four designs should appeal to everyone, and the graphic effects are top notch. I did have trouble getting the program to recognize my Sound Blaster Pro, though Scorpia (our adventure games editor who is a closet Pinball Wizardress) was able to get sounds from her Gravis Ultrasound card, and she speaks quite highly of the music.

Player #4 — Pinball Dreams

Pinball Dreams was originally released last year for the Amiga, and it has the quality graphics and stunning sound that is standard with most Amiga games. Its four machines are all of the scrolling kind, with only one-third of the machine visible at one time. Whereas *Silverball*'s machines were squatty, those of *Pinball Dreams* are very long—over three full screens long. While this gives the designers more room in which to be creative, it also exacerbates the difficulty with making long-distance shots.

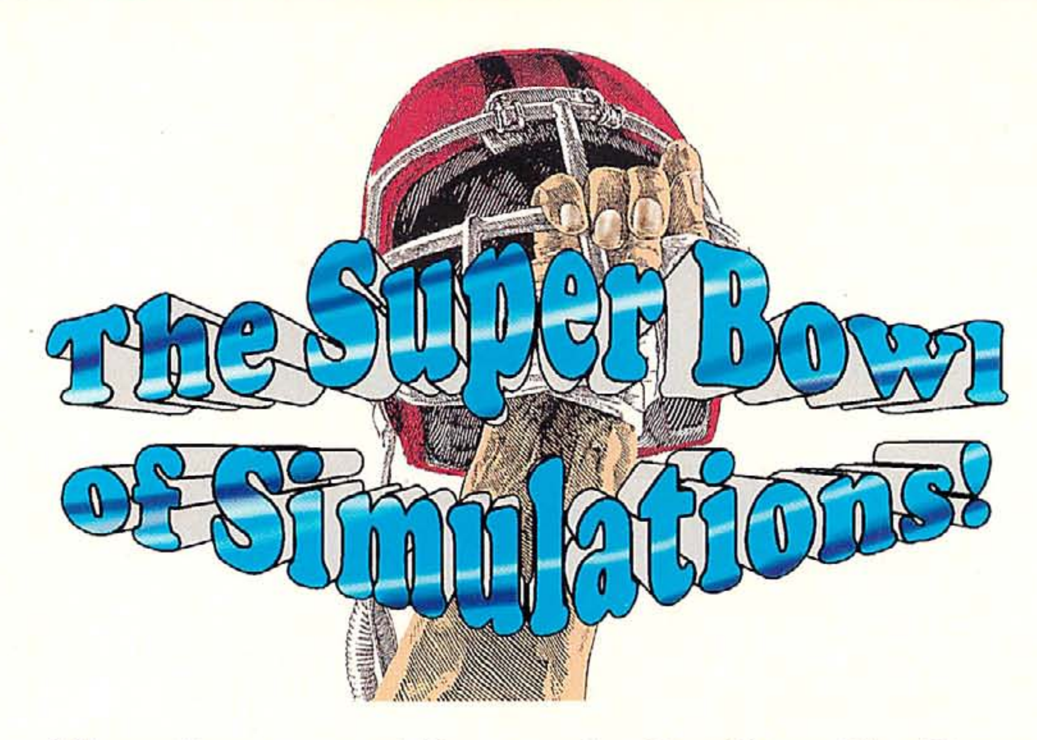
"Ignition" feels like a machine from the late 70s, with its goofy "futuristic" font, standard star-burst bumpers and abundance of lighted targets. "Beat Box," a machine with a music industry theme and cool techno-pop music, is a lesson in design overkill—so much playfield real estate was used to create its three large ramps than there was room for little else. "Steel Wheel," with its early railroad theme, is my personal favorite. It strikes the right balance of elements—a tight bumper area, eight drop targets, two special sink-holes, and two ramps, one of which goes "around the world." The object is to build up a string of cars while earning "mileage" on the ramps and rails. "Nightmare," with a creepy graveyard theme, mixes the elements nicely as well.

Pinball Dreams presents the worst physical model of the lot. The ball behaves like a Ping-Pong ball more than anything, and rips around the screen gaining momentum in impossible ways. This would be bearable if it weren't combined with the screen scrolling and the machines' extra length. A quick shot fired from the bottom of the machine to the top can leave one's head spinning. Worse, the screen scrolling is very closely tied to the ball action, so that if a ball gets caught between two bumpers and is fired up and down, the screen will jerk back and forth with it. After my sessions with this game I was reaching for the aspirin. Too bad, because I really liked two of the machines.


Pinball Dreams

And that's the current crop of pinball madness for this Winter season. Each of these games offers a little something different, and there's sure to be something for every type of gamer. So if you find that the mind is demanding a break, and the fingers itch for fast-twitch release, drop into a local PINBALL directory of choice and belly up to a keyboard. There's never a line, and you can save the quarters for laundry. CGW


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The Super Bowl of Simulations!

MicroProse and Dynamix Go One On One

by Wallace Poulter

In computer gaming, sports simulations tend to run in cycles. Last year's topics of choice were motor racing *(World Circuit* and *Road & Track)* and baseball *(Hardball III, Tony LaRussa 2, Microsports Pro League Baseball)*. This year it seems to be hockey *(NHL Hockey, Brett Hull Hockey, Hockey League Simulator II)* and Football *(Front Page Sports Pro, NFL Coaches Club Football, Tom Landry Deluxe)*. While *Landry* emphasizes strategic instruction over detailed graphics, *Front Page* and *Coaches Club* are pegged squarely at the high performance, simulation oriented football fan.

The Kickoff

Actually, the manuals for these products are such non-events that they seem more like the symbolic coin toss that opens a game than the kickoff which initiates the action. The *Coaches Club* manual is a particularly poor representative of its species. A limited 48-page manual done in a grungy brown tone, this is a new low for MicroProse manuals. The screen shots, also in the grungy brown, are hard to read and average less than one every two pages. At one point is time, MicroProse put out the best manuals in the business, bar none. Times have a'changed.

The best manual I have seen in recent years is that of *Red Baron* from Dynamix, so it is a surprise to see that the *FPSP* manual is so mediocre. The 104-page manual gives the impression that a 204 page manual was compressed into the space. It sports page after page of never-ending text with the occasional, minute screen shot that is usually too dark and very hard to read. What happened to the original *FPSF* manual that was far superior? The saving grace is a very complete index, which makes it bearable. I don't believe I'm being too harsh here. Here are two of the best companies in this industry, with titles like *World Circuit, Civilization, Railroad Tycoon, Master of Orion, Betrayal at Krondor, Red Baron*, and *Aces of the Pacific* to their credit, and yet they have both produced sub-standard manuals and packaging. Fifteen yard penalty and loss of down for both teams.

First Quarter

Many of the features in *FPSP* are the same, or very similar, to *FPSF*. The interface retains its familiar four plays across the screen display, although the total number of potential plays has been increased from 32 to 64. Depending on the play option, the play may or may not be diagrammed. This is one of the primary reasons why I preferred the Standard mode in *FPSF*. Standard mode shows the play graphically, allowing quick decisions on screen.

On the other side of the ball, the MicroProse designers have outdone themselves in providing an unhelpful interface. If you want to see how to design the perfect football play

Front Page Sports Pro



TITLE:	Front Page Sports Pro
PRICE:	$79.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-25MHz or better, 2MB of RAM (EMS), VGA graphics, 9MB hard drive space; AdLib, PAS Plus/16, Roland LAPC-1/MT-32, SoundBlaster Pro, Thunderboard sound cards supported
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	Patrick Cook
PUBLISHER:	Sierra/Dynamix Coarsegold, CA (209) 683-4468

NFL Coaches Club Football



TITLE:	NFL Coaches Club Football
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 7MB hard drive space, joystick, mouse; AdLib, General Midi, PAS, Roland, SoundBlaster sound cards supported
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Ed Fletcher, Doug Whatley
PUBLISHER:	MicroProse Hunt Valley, MD (410) 771-1151

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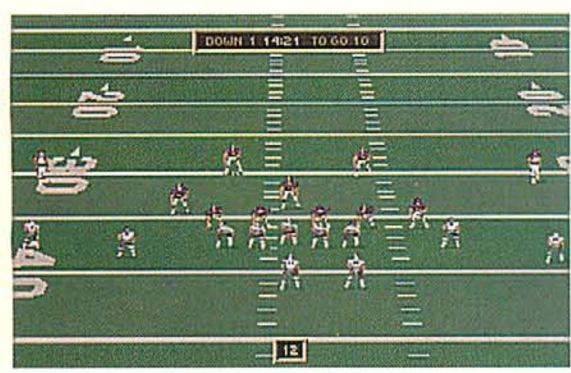
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Circle Reader Service #90



Coaches Club *allows the player to call audibles before the snap.*

calling interface, pick up a copy of *Tom Landry*. Simple, smooth, obvious and so superior to anything else on the market. In its place, *Coaches Club* provides a screen with one play at a time. This is tedious to use and very user unfriendly, although the ability to call audibles is a plus. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the old saying goes. Companies seem to make a habit of doing something different just for the sake of providing their own look. In this case, new is definitely not better.

Graphically, *FPSP* has added little beyond some additional animations such as players flipping over when tackled appropriately. The overall graphic package remains the best in the business, the 3D animations flowing smoothly, especially in the tackles. Similarly, *Coaches Club* offers quality graphics although not on the level of *FPSP*. The graphics are crisp and functional and superior to *Landry* or *Microsports*. Multiple detail settings allow the user to set the graphics level based on their machine's capability. In addition both games have a VCR option. *Coaches Club* has a more user-friendly instant replay here, and the multiple view settings in normal mode also are a cut above *FPSP*.

Packaging, manual, interface, graphics. All important for sure, but the play's the thing.

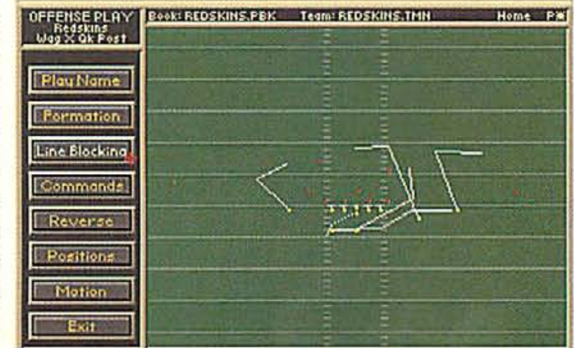
Going Deep

The original *Front Page Sports Football* was a wonderful package as a whole. As my review of the time noted, I loved the play editor, the graphics were light years ahead of anyone else, and I considered *FPSF* on par with *World Circuit* as a sports game. The unfortunate fact was, the more I played the game after the review, the easier *FPSF* became. Scores of 70+ were not uncommon, and it became obvious that Dynamix would need to address the game play in the next version. This they have done although not to the extent I would have hoped.

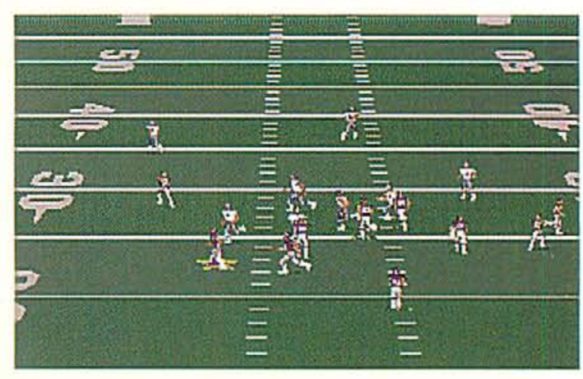
My first game out, Chicago trounced New York 28-23 (trust me it wasn't that close) as Neal Anderson piled up 275 yards on 35 carries for my victorious Bears. The same Basic (play calling only), Standard (play calling and control if one wishes) and Advanced (complete control) options from *FPSF* have carried over and, as then, I still prefer Standard. Half a dozen plays on each side of the ball are all that is needed for victory. As with real football, tendencies and the strengths and weaknesses of your team will decide your play calling. Chicago, for example, should run two thirds of the time and only use Harbaugh to throw in surprise situations. One should never have Harbaugh put it up in a situation of 3rd and over 5, as he is an interception waiting to happen. In my case, five games into a recent league, Harbaugh has yet to throw an interception, specifically because I will not throw in such a situation. Moreover one shouldn't have one formation for passing and one for throwing. If all one does is run out of the 'I' formation and throw out of the Pro set, it isn't that hard to figure out. This happens in real life. Stanford's Blockbuster Bowl defeat of Penn State was predicted because Penn State used a different TE for a pass play than for a running play. All Stanford had to do was look at the TE to see what type of play would be called. In *FPSF*, one can move through their play book and pick passing plays that come out of the same formation as the running plays. Chicago, for example, has a nifty TE pattern down the left sideline that usually has the TE completely uncovered, when the Linebacker bites on the expected running play.

Fumble

MicroProse has made a big deal out of the fact that the AI in *Coaches Club* will learn your tendencies and therefore become an improved opponent. In reality, the AI cheats by creating false situations. This became painfully obvious in a game where New England faced Buffalo. To test the AI's learning capabilities, I devised a strategy to confuse the defense. Playing the game in coach mode rather than arcade style, I spent the entire first half only calling running plays and held Buffalo to a 6-3 half time lead. Starting the second half, I again ran the first series on three consecutive plays and gained a first down. On the subsequent first and 10, I threw a strike to the TE for 41 yards. Then reverting to form, I ran off the right side for another 33 yards. At this point the AI started cheating. Running the same sweep around the right, this time the running back ran into his own Quarterback and then ran backwards for a 7 yard loss. Calling the same play again created the same result, the 7 yard loss. Now I can take an AI "learning" my favorite play and calling the correct defense, but this isn't a blitz coming through the line to stuff the runner. This is the program creating a negative situation (which it repeated in subsequent drives). This is complete and utter rubbish and extremely disappointing coming from MicroProse where I would expect better. Now if you have been counting along at home you will have added 1st and 10 plus two 7 yard loses for a third and 24. Drew Bledsoe took off on a 25 yard scramble, (and I confirmed his one carry as a 25-yard gain in the game ending stats) to set up a 4th and 1! Last time I read the rules, gaining one more yard than one needs for a first down will usually earn a first down.



Custom play design in Coaches Club *is fast and easy.*

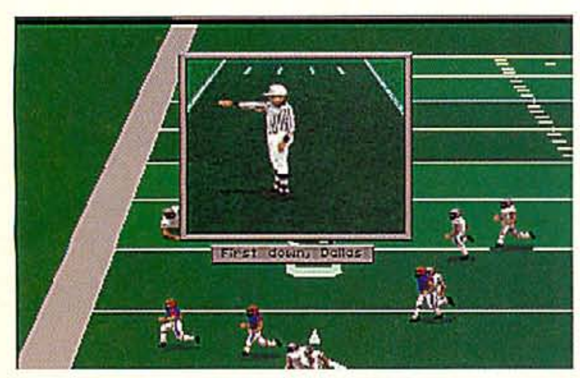


The graphics in Coaches Club *are excellent, but second to* Front Page Football.

Audible

Modem play, once promised in both games, has not materialized. This still leaves *Microsports Football* and *Tom Landry* as the premier football games for modem use. However *FPSP* has gone part of the way there. The biggest addition to *FPSP* is the customized coaching profile.





A new NFLPA license earns Front Page Football *an important first down.*

The profile allows the user to specify play calling in different game situations. Astoundingly there are over 2500 game situations per half. This feature allows game plans to be uploaded either directly or via on-line services for use in leagues or just as an individual challenge. Want to play The Wol's Chicago Bears? Maybe I'll upload a game plan to CompuServe. Nor is the game plan predictable because three different plays are assigned to each situation with percentage values designated by the user. Therefore if an exact situation repeats (which is unlikely), there is no guarantee that the same play will be called.

League play is a strength of both products.



Play creation in Front Page Football *is rich, but trails* CC Football *in ease of use.*

Although *FPSP* is the winner, this time it is not so clear-cut. While *FPSP* has the college draft, trades, injuries and more that *Coaches Club* does not offer, *FPSP* continues to be incredibly slow in simulating league games. Dave Holt and Microsports have had this right for a long time with their very quick simulation that gives full stats. Why no one else can does this is beyond me, but *Coaches Club* has it down to manageable proportions. Both games had eyebrow raising results in league simulation, but then a football game can turn on just a couple of plays and players, such as the situation with Emmitt Smith. He is present in both games, and the first week of the season, Dallas was victorious by large margins against Washington. In the real NFL, of course, the lack of Emmitt Smith cost Dallas the game. More significantly, both games had reasonable stats for both offensive and defensive players that I feel is important to the credibility of the game results generated.

Sending in the Signals

The one area in which *Coaches Club* beats *FPSP* is, ironically, the area in which *FPSP* illustrates the most strength—the Play Editor. In *Coaches Club* I was able to design plays without having to look at the manual, a situation that did not occur with the original *Front Page Sports Football.* Obviously I know that game enough to not need the manual for *FPSP*, but a first time buyer would still need the tutorial in the Dynamix manual. Why *Coaches Club* could have such a great interface for the Play Editor and such a bad interface for play calling is a mystery to me. In fact it is the strength of the Play Editor that leads me to believe that there is hope for *Coaches Club.* It is strong and well-designed, and boasts a myriad of options. I particularly liked the advice on setting up pass routes. While running a pass pattern, the receiver will attempt to get open, but there is no guarantee that he will go where you want him to. Therefore it is suggested that the player assign a couple of way points (similar to the logic boxes in *FPSP)* for the receiver to run to and then issue the command "pass route" for him to find an open space. This is exactly what receivers do when combating a zone defense.

Which brings us to the National Football League Players Association that granted licenses to both products. Unlike other sports, not all players belong to the NFLPA. Kevin Butler, the Chicago Bears kicker, becomes Rhett O'Hara in *FPSF.* Cute for sure and after he went 0 for 4 against New York, frankly I did give a damn. However, the unsuspecting gamer is going to believe that the NFLPA represents all players in the league as their name suggests. This is misleading at best. Maybe they should change their name to Some National Football League Players Association.

Crunch Time

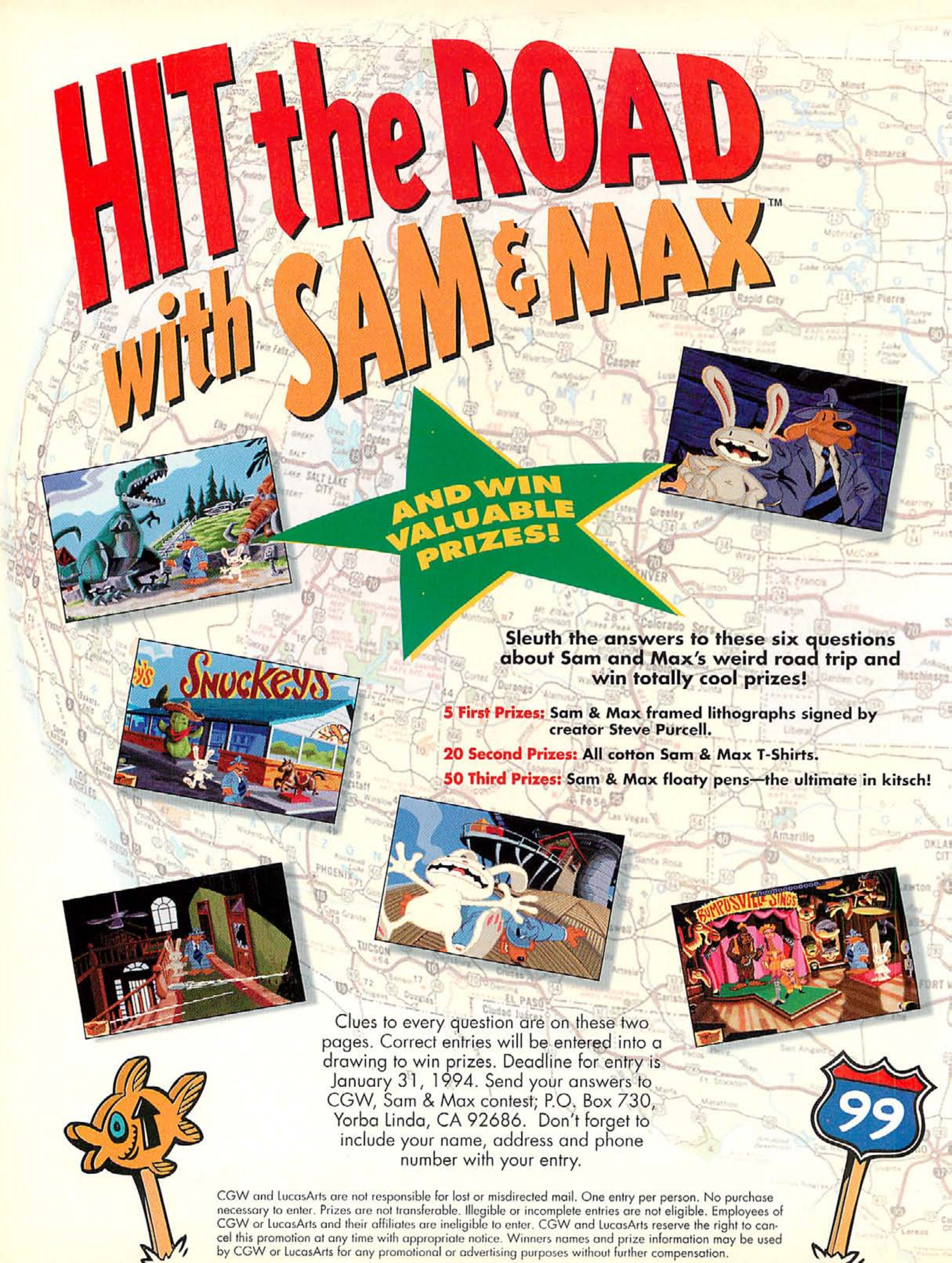
Front Page Sports Pro is a nice step forward by Patrick Cook and company. But that is all it is; a step. If NFL player names are your thing, then you can consider *FPSP* a leap rather than a step. However for the legion of *FPSF* fans out there, *Pro* is nothing more than an upgrade to a great product. If you play in leagues via on-line services (which I recommend), then *Pro* is a good value, but as a straight computer opponent it may be worth waiting for the next incarnation.



Front Page Football *is the crystal-clear victor when it comes to graphics.*

NFL Coaches Club is, alas, a disappointment. The designer, Doug Whatley, is a personal friend (and hopefully still is after this review)! I had hoped for great things from this product. Moreover, on on-line systems such as Prodigy, Compuserve and GEnie, many game players whose opinions I usually trust have said great things about the product. I'm afraid I just don't see it. There is a terrific foundation for a superb football product, that much is obvious. The underlying concept of plays decided by the momentum and mass of the players, and their subsequent actions, should be the industry standard. The Play Editor is something I will tinker with long after this review is written. But if a company wants to compete in the sports game arena they need to either provide something that hasn't been done, or do it better than the competition. *World Circuit*, the previous foray into the sports arena by MicroProse accomplished both goals. *Coaches Club* does not. **CGW**


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c. Eiffel Tower
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b. Skeeball
c. Bumper Cars
BUMPUSVILLE
3. Sam & Max cruise the U.S. in what kind of car?
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b. A Beamer
c. A Beetle
4. Sam & Max meet a famous singer who lives where?
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b. Bumpusville
c. Dollywood
GONE OF TRAGEDY
WAK A RAT
5. What deadly metallic monster do Sam & Max encounter?
a. Frankenstein
b. Godzilla
c. T-Rex
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b. Seattle's Space Needle
c. The Empire State Building
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Good-bye Gold Box!

Dark Sun Introduces A New Line Of SSI Role-Playing Games

Dark Sun is the first in a new series of role-playing games from **Strategic Simulations**, and it is about as far from their previous series of games (the "gold box" series) as you can get. While there is certainly plenty of combat here, it is not of the incessant, fight-after-fight kind that characterized *Pool of Radiance, et al.* In fact, many times unwanted encounters can even be avoided.

I mention this up front as many players familiar with the gold box games may approach *Dark Sun* with deep suspicion, thinking it "more of the same." Happily, this is not the case; SSI is taking their role-playing line in a new direction, which is good to see.



The basic system is a variant of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd edition rules, and you should expect some big changes here. For one thing, character stats can now go as high as 24. For another, along with the usual elf, half-elf, dwarf, etc., there are some new races available: half-giants, half-dwarfs (called Muls), and, for the first time ever, Thri-Kreen, the mantis warriors.

In another departure from the familiar, there seems to be no difference in stat maximums between male and female characters. For example, a male half-giant can have a strength of 24; so can a female half-giant.

Character classes have changed in some respects, as well. Paladins have been dropped and Gladiators added. Gladiators seem to be slightly better in combat than the standard fighter, and they cannot be multi-classed with another profession. Magic-users are called Preservers here, but aside from the name change and a wider variety of spells available, they are the same spell-slingers we are familiar with from before.

Psionics have been included for the first time, along with a Psionicist class. Every character comes with a limited psionic ability, chosen from among kinetic, metabolic and telepathic. These powers cannot be added to or enhanced. Only actual Psionicists can learn new powers or increase old ones on level gain, and they can choose from any of the three areas, as they have access to all of them instead of just one.

The most drastic change is with the Clerics. They are no longer "just" clerics; they are now *elemental* clerics, and each must choose a sphere of influence from among earth, air, fire and water. This choice dictates what spells a cleric can use, as there are different ones for each sphere.

Even worse, there is a fifth sphere, called "Cosmos," and clerics have only limited access to it. They receive Cosmos spells only through the third level, and it's Cosmos spells that are the traditional healing ones. The standard cleric, then, will never be able to do better than a Cure Light Wounds.

So how do you get healing? From *Druids*, who can use all the Cosmos spells, including such important ones as Cure Serious, Cure Critical, Neutralize Poison and Raise Dead. About the only thing a cleric can do that a Druid can't is Turn Undead, making Clerics virtually worthless in this system. The traditional party healer is now a liability instead of an asset.

TITLE:	Dark Sun
PRICE:	$79.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 2MB of RAM, VGA only
PROTECTION:	Documentation look-up
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Almanor, CA (408) 737-6800

It must be pointed out here that this inanity is not the fault of SSI; they are just following the rules of TSR. Why TSR decided to split the clerics out

this way, which weakens them considerably, and then on top of it, provide few decent spells for them (fire clerics seem to come off best), is a mystery. It certainly doesn't do anything good for the game.

The armor system—another TSR invention—is equally bizarre and incomprehensible. First, armor comes in parts, with separate pieces for the torso, arms and legs. This is not the problem. The problem is in the materials, which can be leather, bone or metal.

You might expect that bone would be better than leather, and metal better than either, but it isn't always so. Most pieces, for whichever area of the body, generally give one point of protection, whatever the material. There is some bone and metal torso armor that gives two points. Aside from a few pieces of magical armor, leg and arm pieces always give one point of protection.



Now, if bone or metal provided some sort of extra protection, say against acid attacks, having these different materials would make sense. Unfortunately, there is no practical difference between wearing bone armor and leather armor (and in some cases, even metal). Perhaps in the *Dark Sun* paper and pencil rules there are advantages to certain armor, but they aren't evident here.

Druids and Thri-kreen come off worst in the armor department. Druids cannot wear any armor, and they can't even equip a shield. It is best to multi-class a Druid with Fighter so the character doesn't have to run around naked for most of the game. For the Thri-Kreen, there just isn't any armor, as it's all designed for humanoid figures. They can carry shields, but this reduces their fighting effectiveness. (See the following *Dark Sun* tips article for more on this.)



So the character side of the game has its weak points. Most of these can be overcome by careful party selection and maximization of stats, but it's very annoying to have to put up with this at all.

Moving to the new engine and graphics—what might be called the SSI side of the game—there are some very nice features. The visual presentation is in the *Ultima* style, with an overhead view and one-size world, but without the slanting, or three-quarter, perspective. However, it is not a scrolling, one-piece world. The areas are in sections, with a new one loaded as the party moves from place to place.

What is unique here is that you can scroll the cursor over the entire section to see what's around before you do any moving. In addition, there is an auto-map that shows an outline of the area, and any creatures in this area will show up as slow-blinking red dots. Put the cursor on them and click the mouse—the map goes away and you're seeing the actual world again, including whatever is in that spot.

The party can also be moved in this fashion. Position the cursor anywhere on the screen and click. If there are no obstacles (and nothing to fight along the path), the party will move to it automatically. This makes movement very quick and also allows you to give a wide berth (most of the time) to things you prefer to avoid at that moment.

Speaking of movement, most of the time the party is represented on screen by only the icon of the party leader. This is much better than in *Ultima*, where a parade was always following you around, walking blithely into traps and other hazards. Here, you have only one character to maneuver and life is easier. You can split the group out if you want, but it serves no real purpose, as the party will split automatically when combat starts.

This also allows you to "sneak up" on things sometimes. You can move the party close, but not so close to be noticed, and get off a spell before the bad guys even realize there's a threat. On some occasions, this tactic can be a life-saver.

Spellcasting for mages has been improved. They no longer have to memorize spells, which is a terrific feature. When a Preserver casts a spell, all of the spells he or she knows for a particular level are available. Of course, there is still a limit to the number of spells a character can cast per experience level, but not having to memorize them beforehand makes them much more useful.

This is particularly advantageous because combat is much more tactical now. With a one-size world, there is no zooming in to a confined battle site. Fighting can occur over a wide area, where fireballs might not be as useful as, say, Hold Monster or Solid Fog. Given the wide variety of both terrain and spells for mages, it only makes sense to allow access to all spells known.

On the other hand, this also presents some difficulties when a mage goes up a level and has to choose a spell to learn. There are many of them, and they all look good. Compounding this problem is the fact that there are a number of magic scrolls from which mages can learn spells. Of course, since you don't know which scrolls they are in advance, your mage could end up learning a spell obtainable from a scroll later, thereby "wasting" a spell slot. Still, this problem is better than trying to decide which spells to memorize.

One especially good change to the combat system now allows your characters to move away from combat without taking a hit in the back. You can retreat a severely injured character from melee, or maneuver a character around enemies, without having to worry about them taking extra damage. Naturally, the same holds true for the opponents.

Psi powers tend to be on the weak side. Offensive abilities generally don't do more than 1d6 or 1d10 of damage, regardless of the psionic's level. However, there are a number of protective powers, and the telepathic disciplines do have some useful non-damaging abilities.

As with the gold box games, you can change the level of difficulty (i.e., number of hit points your opponents have), thereby making it easier or harder to get through the fights. Also as before, the easy level gives you less experience per combat. Even so, by the time you reach the end game everyone is likely to have achieved maximum level, which is 9th for all classes.

What is most surprising, perhaps, is the lack of information in the manual. We are all familiar with the many tables and charts in the

back of the gold box manuals. For *Dark Sun,* there is almost nothing. You get the experience level tables, spell progression tables, and that's about it. Nothing on min/max stats by race. Nothing on how far any race can advance in a particular profession. No chart showing which professions are open to which races (this is mentioned in the class descriptions, but a recap table would have been good to have). You aren't even told which psi powers are given to non-psionic-class characters.

Okay, now that you've heard about the system, you want to know about the story. The action takes place on the world of Athas, where life isn't pleasant. Blasted in the past by magic, much of the world is wasteland. Water and metal are scarce. Cities are ruled by powerful sorcerer-kings and their assistants, the Templars. Anyone at any time can find himself sold into slavery or thrown into the arena to fight as gladiators.

That's where the game begins for you. Your party of four has been condemned to fight in the arena of Draj City, facing tougher and tougher opponents, until they lose and die. That being something to avoid, the group escapes. (It had better, or this will be a short game.) Once in the desert, your characters become involved with allying the small villages established by other escaped slaves.

Alliance is necessary, as Draj is mustering an army to sweep through the deserts to destroy the villages once and for all. As you might expect, gaining allies will not be easy, and so the greater part of the game is spent doing something for each of the villages, persuading them to join. And, to round things out, there are some side quests which, while not part of the main path, provide extra experience and occasional goodies for the group.

The solution to every problem is not kill-kill-kill. You can escape from the gladiator slave pens without a fight. You can stop the Magera from raiding the Elvish caravan without having to wipe them all out. The same goes for bringing about a rapprochement between the Dark Spiders and the Mindhome folk. Some combat is necessary, but it isn't of the mindless, genocidal slaughter variety.

Saving allows for ten positions. The saves start small, but will grow to over a megabyte apiece by the time you get to the end game. You can save almost any time except in combat. However, you *can* load the game during combat, which is handy if your party is being trashed by superior forces.

While SSI has shed most of the gold box here, they have kept one infamous feature: back-to-back combat at the finale. The first wave is composed of just "regulars," who are not difficult to defeat, but they will do some damage and use up some of your spells. Then comes the second wave—elite troops with several mages and black scorpions in tow. This bunch is *very* tough, even with the mode on easy. There was really no need for two combats here; the elites all by themselves are quite enough, and very likely players will have to do this one several times before winning, which takes a lot of fun out of the fight.

The single biggest problem with *Dark Sun,* however, comes at the very end, after you have won the final combat. Up to this moment, the game ran exceptionally cleanly, with nary a crash or technical glitz (except sound; see the following article). Then, as the ending animations kicked in, the game dropped dead. Not good, because after this, you get some rewards, as well as the chance to roam around a bit more and save your team for the sequel.

After much hard work on the part of SSI's top programmer, Russ Brown, the problem was isolated to the ending animation sequence, and seems to be related to a type of memory fragmentation. This fragmentation appears to be caused by certain combinations of spells used in the final battles. Unfortunately, because of the wide diversity of spells and psi powers that can be invoked, the exact combinations can't be determined. So the crash is an iffy thing; it will happen to some people and not others. There is no way of knowing in advance if it will happen to you.

Fortunately, at what might be called the last minute, Russ Brown was able to come up with a fix. I am happy to report that the fix works perfectly (yes, mine was one of the games that hung), and I was finally (!) able to get past the last battle to the part beyond. The fix is available free from SSI and can also be found on many of the major modem nets, such as GEnie and CompuServe, and probably, by the time you read this, on many local BBSs as well. You may want to get it, just to be on the safe side; you really don't want to go through the final battle any more times than you have to.

Overall, despite several flaws, my impression of *Dark Sun* is favorable. SSI is moving to a more mature form of CRPG. The completely new engine, world, rules and graphics, along with a new emphasis on story, does a lot to distance them from the gold box image. As with all new things, the first steps are apt to be a little shaky. Still, *Dark Sun* (with a little overhaul) shows much promise for the future, and promises a good game to play right now. CGW

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Dark Sun Tips

Scorpia Sheds Light on SSI's Latest

Since your *Dark Sun* party has only four characters, multi-classing is a must. Remember, you are not just preparing for the game itself, but also the fights at the end, where you'll want every bit of firepower and fighting power you can muster.

For that reason, it is best to max out the stats of each character, especially in the areas of strength, constitution and dexterity—particularly dexterity. As noted in the main article, armor doesn't give you much protection, so you have to rely on dexterity to get the AC down for a good part of the game.

My initial team consisted of a Half-Giant gladiator, Half-Elf F/Druid (fire), Dwarf F/Cleric (earth) and an Elf F/MU. These worked out pretty well. Everyone could fight, and most could cast spells. The fighter class allowed the Druid and Preserver to wear armor, which is important since there were no magic robes, bracers, etc., that I could find in the game. I did come across some magic cloaks, but these provided only specialized protection, not AC protection.

The second team was composed of a Half-Dwarf F/Psionic, Half-Dwarf F/Cleric (fire), Elf F/Mu and a Thri-Kreen F/Druid (fire). The Thri-Kreen are pretty good. They have the second best wisdom (21), and they can be tough fighters in the early going. A Thri-Kreen maxed in strength and fighting bare-"handed" can fight four times for damage of 1d4+8 per attack (or 4x1d4+8), and they do an additional d4+9 acid attack. They can equip a shield, but it reduces their attacks from four to two. This is also true for equipping weapons, although as opponents get tougher, it is better to give your Thri-Kreen weapons in both "hands." The use of weapons/shields does not affect the acid attack.

In fact, it's best to have all your fighters go around with weapons in each hand. They do more damage that way, and the faster you kill the enemy, the less chance the enemy has of killing you. While you do give up a little armor class for this (i.e., no shields), the increased fighting ability usually makes up for it.

How many battles you want to fight before escaping is up to you. The first couple aren't too bad, and will give you practice with the system. The third combat usually features back-to-back fights, first with some Thri-Kreen and then a variety of nasty critters. This was as far as I went before deciding it was time to get out of there.

When you make it out of the slave pens, it's better to help the Tari of the upper warrens, rather than the lower. Be careful in the second level of the sewers: the Dagolar slime can be deadly because their psionic powers can stun characters and make them unable to fight. Synaptic Static from a psionic will prevent this, but use it sparingly. There are several Dagolar slime combats, and you won't be able to rest (and renew psi points) until Dagolar is dead.

Once out of the sewers and into the fields of Draj, it is best to kill all the guards and head north to Teaquetzal. This gets you quickly into the main plot, and with a nifty +2 sword, to boot.

Since the game is non-linear, and since you are free to return anywhere you've previously been (even the slave pens), you have a lot of freedom to roam around, and you aren't locked into the typical "do-this-before-that-but-first-the-other-thing." Some places might be too tough for the current level of your team; if so, make a note and return later. The oasis is like that. Since it's encircled by 20+ guards, you may not want to take it on right away. Just give the oasis a wide berth and come back another time.

In Gedron, it is best to kill the statue before it leaves (this will make more sense when you reach this part). If you don't, it will show up in the final battle, and you're going to have enough headaches without this thing to make it even tougher. Gedron is a good place to visit early, though, because you get one of the two best weapons in the game here.

Don't overlook the commissions from Notaku on the red sand plateau. You will get money, experience and items for completing them, at least through the "mysterial stinger" task.

There are a couple of things to watch out for in the Spider/Mindhome caves. After the coup, you *must* go visit the Outcast before anyone else; otherwise, he won't recognize your achievement and reward you with the silk armor. Later, when you go back over the wall to the castle, you must go over the one with the spider guard. If you go over the other wall, the folk with you become "stuck" and won't move.

Some spells you can find or buy in the game: Hold Monster, Hold Undead, Monster Summoning III, Rainbow Pattern, Web, Melf's Minute Meteors (just pop em in the microwave! Sorry, bad joke), Minor Globe, Mirror Image and Spirit Armor. You can also find a staff of confusion spells, a wand of lightning bolts, and a necklace of fireballs, as well as several items usable only by psionics. The Metal Storm Ring, which casts Ice Storm spells, is noted as being usable by any

MAXIMUM STATS BY RACE

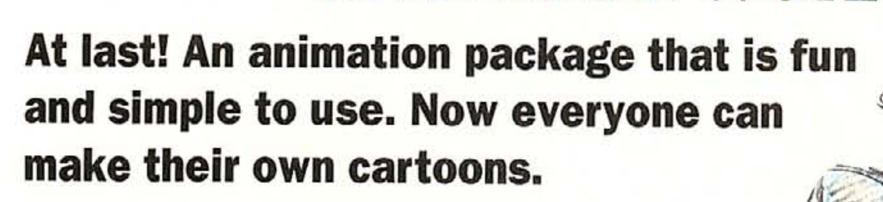
Race	ST	DX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
Dwarf	21	19	22	20	20	18
Elf	20	22	18	21	19	20
Half-Elf	20	21	19	20	20	20
Half-Giant	24	15	22	15	17	17
Halfling	18	22	19	20	22	19
Human	20	20	20	20	20	20
Mul (Half-Dwarf)	22	20	21	19	20	18
Thri-Kreen	20	22	20	19	21	18

Psi Powers (for non-psionic-class characters)

Kinetics: Detonate, Ballistic Attack, Control Body, Inertial Barrier
Metabolic: Life Drain, Biofeedback, Flesh Armor, Graft Weapon
Telepathic: Superior Invisibility, Ego Whip, Intellect Fortress, Mind Blank, Psionic Blast

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SOFTWARE

Circle Reader Service #66

class, but in actuality, only a Preserver can make it work.

The items have limited charges, so use them sparingly; try to save them for the end of game combats. Remember, even if a spellcaster is hit and can't cast spells, he or she can still use a spell-casting item.

Once you have accomplished your mission in the ruins, *do not go out the way you came in.* That will only involve you in unnecessary combat with a small horde of nasty critters. Just before you leave, invoke the genie and take your three wishes, and the last one should be for his help. That will get you where you want to be without a lot of fuss.

The final combat is going to be rough. Try to dispose of the first wave as quickly as you can, with as little damage and spell use as possible. There is a short breather before the second group appears, so use this time to heal the injured and save the game.

When the elites show up, use as many disabling/obscuring spells as you can, such as Glitterdust, Rainbow Pattern, Dust Cloud, Solid Fog, Quicksand, Stinking Cloud, Confusion and Chaos. You want to slow the troops down and prevent them from attacking. Make no mistake about it, they are accurate and hit very hard, especially the commander. Don't overlook the mages at the back, either. They will merrily throw fireballs and ice storms your way at the first opportunity.

You will do best if your side gets the initiative. If it doesn't, you're very likely to lose, as the troops will close in fast, using bows until they reach melee range. Should things go badly for you, restore and try again. When it's all over, you may want to back up the save files to bring your party into the sequel. For this, you will need at least two files. The first one is SAVECHAR.GFF. The other is whichever SAVEXX.SAV that holds your final save. For instance, if your final save is in slot six, you'd copy out SAVE06.SAV. If you went through the game with more than one team, you can copy out their final saves, too. CGW

Dark Sun and Gravis Ultrasound

Dark Sun is the first game I've played that supports the Gravis Ultrasound card in its native mode. What a difference from SoundBlaster emulation! The music is just incredible (okay, the SSI sound team had a lot to do with it, too). Now I've been spoiled, and I don't want to go back to regular SoundBlaster (which will be necessary, alas, until more companies support this card).

The Ultrasound has been panned in some magazines. It's easy to dump on a card when games that support it are few or non-existent. Having heard the Ultrasound native mode here, as well as in *Return To Zork* (more on this one in an upcoming issue) and *Silverball* (yes, pinball is my secret vice!), I am not sorry I made the Ultrasound my soundcard.

However, there is a problem with the melding of sound effects and music in *Dark Sun.* This is most likely to show up when changing location screens. The sound effects go a little crazy, producing an annoying "errrrrrrr" background noise. While the music is unaffected, the sound effects don't right themselves, so it's usually necessary to exit the game and reload the Ultramid. After this happened a couple of times, I finally turned the sound effects off. Sigh.

This does seem to be related to the *Dark Sun* implementation. *Silverball,* with its many sound effects and fantastic background music, has so far performed flawlessly. In any case, Ultrasound owners should be aware that the sound effects may need to be turned off while playing *Dark Sun.*

Circle Reader Service #54



Trading Spaces

Origin's *Wing Commander: Privateer*

by Jeff James

Several years ago, there was one game that drew more of my attention than any other: Firebird's *Elite*. In *Elite*, the player was an interstellar tradesman struggling to remain profitable in a galaxy of bloodthirsty pirates, overzealous police, and invading space aliens. Over the years, several attempts have been made at updating the *Elite* universe, with *Lightspeed* and *Hyperspeed* from MicroProse and Origin's *Space Rogue* being the most recent efforts. It's not difficult to pin-point the source of this genre's appeal—it's freedom. All of these games offer the gamer real choices about how to live one's simulated existence. The next step in the adventure is not scripted in these games; piracy or peaceful trade, assist a cause or fight against it—the player makes the call.

With the release of *Privateer*, **Origin Systems** puts their own spin on the genre, making strides in some areas and stepping back in others. *Privateer* is set in the tumultuous Gemini sector of the *Wing Commander* universe, situated along the edge of known space. True to the *Wing Commander* story, the Kilrathi will occasionally appear, harassing merchant vessels and threatening human settlements. Most of the time, however, one will encounter the riffraff of Gemini sector: a potpourri of criminals, pirates, thugs, mercenaries and religious zealots that frequent the space lanes of the frontier. The player is thrown into this fertile mix as an opportunistic space pilot for hire, a character not at all unlike *Star Wars'* Han Solo.

The game begins with the player on the Achilles mining colony and in command of a lowly Tarsus-class vessel, a gift from the late grandfather of the player's character. There are a few places to explore on Achilles, among them a commodity exchange, a ship dealer and a bar. This format is used at most of the locations the player can visit, and each type of base (i.e., agricultural, mining, refinery, pirate hide-out) looks the same. While this provides a consistent layout and interface, it does get a bit monotonous.

At the onset of the game, there are two ways to make money. Players with an independent, capitalistic streak can buy inexpensive metal ore, ship it to Helen (an agricultural planet in the same star system as Achilles), sell it for a profit and purchase cheap foodstuffs, then return to Achilles and sell the food there. This process of ferrying cargo between mining/refinery planets and agricultural ones can be used with success throughout the game. The other potential for profit is in missions. There are normally three ways to obtain missions: the mission computer, the Mercenary's Guild and the Merchant's Guild. The mission computer—located in the center of the base—serves as a clearing house for a variety of money making ventures: ferrying cargo from

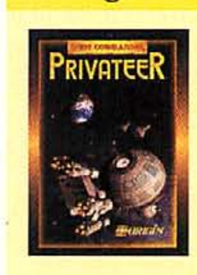


one planet to another, patrolling nav points, defending bases and the like. The Mercenary's Guild specializes in gun-for-hire work, with the bulk of the missions devoted to hunting down pirates, patrolling space lanes and eliminating Kilrathi. The Merchant's Guild is the perfect organization for less dexterous gamers, with profitable commerce taking precedence over combat. The guilds offer more lucrative missions than the mission computer, but there are two caveats: these unions require dues ($1000 for the Merchant's Guild, $5000 for the Mercenary's Guild) and one must usually travel out of the current system to complete the mission, requiring the addition of a jump drive to one's craft. A jump drive is absolutely essential to complete *Privateer* ; with over four dozen planets/bases scattered throughout more than 60 star systems, the world of *Privateer* is a very big place.

A jump drive isn't the only component that can be added to a player's ship. The local ship dealer offers a menu flush with expensive, high-tech delights. Shields and engines are offered in five strength levels, with scanners, ECM packages, and armor plating available at a variety of price points. Eight different gun types are available, ranging from the quick-firing laser cannon to the awesome plasma gun. For even more firepower, proton torpedoes and four missile types can be added, turning a passive trading rig into a potent offensive vessel. The ultimate upgrade is a new ship, and the player will want to upgrade ASAP. The decrepit Tarsus that one starts with gives players boxy, utilitarian view screens and displays with a limited field of vision. It is an awful ship and should be turned into scrap metal before the unfriendlies in space do it first.

Once launched into space, the playing perspective shifts to the cockpit of the craft. In terms of playability, *Privateer* plays much like its predecessors in the *Wing Commander* series. All the same keystrokes are used ("W" still cycles through the available missiles, "Tab" still engages the afterburners, etc.), so *Wing Commander* aficionados should feel right at home. Gamers should know that the same joystick calibration routine used in *Strike Commander*, does not work so well

Wing Commander: Privateer



TITLE:	Wing Commander: Privateer
PRICE:	$79.95 (speech pack: $19.95)
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 22MB hard drive space (with speech pack); Ad Lib, SoundBlaster sound cards supported
PUBLISHER:	Origin Systems Austin, TX (512) 335-5200

here. It refused to accept my CH Product's Flightstick at face value; a call to Origin's tech support provided the answer in the form of a text file entitled "JOYB.DAT", filled with several "X's" and placed in the C:\PRIVATER directory. Even when things are working as they should, the joystick control in Privateer is somewhat coarse. Players used to the sensitive combat controls in *Wing Commander* may find *Privateer* difficult to get used to.

Plotlines And Pirates

Whereas *Wing Commander I & II* featured very structured storylines, *Privateer* sheds the linearity of its predecessors and gives the player free reign to explore where and when he desires. In *Privateer*, the player can travel to any location in the game, provided he doesn't get blasted to bits in the process. The game does start the player off in the relatively docile Troy system, allowing players to get a feel for the game before being pounced upon by experienced opponents. Even so, the early going is tough, with the player having the very minimum of weapons and armor. Some might become frustrated with this long and shaky start, but those who diligently work their way out of the Troy system will be rewarded.



Privateer does have a storyline. A loose backbone of missions serve to guide the player towards the eventual conclusion of the game. Unlike the storyline in *Wing Commander I & II* (which essentially led the player by the nose through a string of tightly connected combat missions), *Privateer* lets the player proceed at his own pace. Once one gets on the right track, an exciting storyline unfolds, beginning with the discovery of a bizarre alien artifact and culminating in an encounter with an advanced alien civilization—and the enigmatic alien spacecraft alluded to in the *Privateer* introduction. *Privateer's* treatment of plot and story may be crucial to some gamers enjoyment of the product. Gamers who preferred the connected, structured flow of events in the *Wing Commander* series may be disappointed; on the other hand, players, like myself, who felt constrained by the same structured plotline should find *Privateer* a much more enjoyable gaming experience.

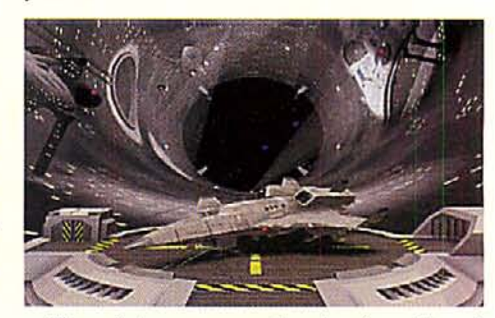
As enjoyable as I found *Privateer* to be, two aspects of the story were troubling to me. The first concerns *Privateer's* decidedly sophomoric streak, first evinced when the player attempts to communicate with other spacecraft. During these exchanges, the player is given dialogue choices such as "Can I borrow a donut, Lard-O?", "What's your sign?", and "I'm going to slow roast your nuts!". This boyish approach extends to the portrayal of women in *Privateer* as well. The female secretary in the Mercenary's Guild is shown filing her nails and chewing gum, while most of the other females encountered in the game are portrayed in a similar, stereotypical fashion. In these two aspects, the scriptwriting of *Privateer* lacks the relative sophistication of Origin's other games.

In another aspect, the world of *Privateer* is up to par with Origin's *Ultima* series in terms of offering real moral choices. In *Privateer*, the player has the opportunity to smuggle drugs and sell human slaves for profit. Trafficking in either cargo is viewed as criminal by the "good" side of the Privateer universe (i.e., the Confederacy and local planetary militia). Confederate and militia patrol craft often will scan the player's ship for contraband; if drugs or slaves are detected on the player's ship, they immediately attack. Unfortunately, gamers who scoop unmarked cargo out of space after a fierce dogfight could unknowingly find themselves in possession of either of these illegal cargoes and be attacked immediately by the authorities. Origin should be given credit for providing these options and leaving the heavy hand of morality out of it. If they wish, players can go over to the "Dark Side," but they must be willing to deal with the consequences. On the other side, it would be nice to have the option of free captured slaves or carry out raids on pirate bases trafficking in questionable cargo.

This Is Not Your Father's Wing Commander

Privateer doesn't require quite the investment in hardware that *Strike Commander* does, but potential pilots should be forewarned: space smugglers do not fly on slow 486s alone. Origin *recommends* a machine with a 486 CPU running at least 25 MHz—it should be a *requirement*. *Privateer* doesn't offer any controls to adjust game detail settings, something that would allow users to match the game to the speed of their machine. When engaging multiple bogies, screen updates become very choppy on anything less than a 486/33 with gobs of RAM. The situation worsens when a dogfight occurs within the blue mist of jump points, with screen updates slowing to a crawl. The ideal gaming system for *Privateer* is a fast 486 machine with a speedy local bus video card and 8 MB of RAM. Allocating at least 4 MB of RAM to SmartDrive helps smooth out choppy frame rates and prevent pauses for hard drive access during gameplay.

Although *Privateer* worked perfectly with a Sound Blaster Pro, it refused to work correctly on a machine with the Gravis Ultrasound in Sound Blaster emulation mode. *Privateer* would also not work with the Pro Audio Spectrum (PAS) in native mode; it only worked when the PAS was configured for Sound Blaster emulation (although the *Privateer* configuration program incorrectly lists the Pro Audio Spectrum as a valid option). Sound cards compatible with the MPU-401 General MIDI Interface standard will work with *Privateer*, although the Roland LAPC-1 sound card is not directly supported. *Privateer's* incomplete sound card support is puzzling, as robust support for a wide range of sound cards is vital to any entertainment product.



The *Privateer* soundtrack (by Nenad Vugrinec) is a model of unobtrusiveness; after dozens of hours of playing time, I still found myself enjoying the game music enough to continue listening to it. Graphics are polished throughout, with plenty of ray-traced objects to complete the gritty, hard-edged portrayal of life in a distant, violent future. The 64-page manual is an excellent one, complete with a pithy quick start section to get novice players up and gaming in a hurry.

Privateer isn't for everyone. Like *Strike Commander*, *Privateer* is a deluxe, high-end product designed for use with 486 machines sporting fast video cards and vast hard drives. Gamers with less capable gaming hardware should look to *Wing Commander Academy* for a less hardware-intensive slice of the *Wing Commander* universe. Gamers able and willing to pay the high hardware admission price—and patient enough to endure a slow start, hardware glitches and minor bugs—should find the cash-for-game exchange rate to their liking. **CGW**



THE CHIEF'S QUEST

An Arresting Interview With Former Los Angeles Police Chief, Daryl Gates

When Sierra On-Line decided to publish another game in their *Police Quest* series, they decided to guarantee that the game illustrate proper police procedures and exploit the celebrity status of a well-known law enforcement official. The company contacted former L.A.P.D. Chief Daryl Gates and signed him as the celebrity designer. As the game neared completion, Sierra provided an opportunity for *CGW* to interview the controversial police chief. Rather than trodding over the well-beaten ground of past controversy, the interview focused on Gates' involvement in *Police Quest 4: Open Season.* Gates was joined in the *CGW* offices by Tammy Dargan, the *Police Quest* Project Manager and former television producer with credits for *America's Most Wanted* and other television series.

CGW: *So, what's a successful talk show host like you (Gates hosts an evening talk show on Los Angeles radio station KFI) doing helping to develop an adventure game about the police? (polite chuckle)*

The Chief: Well, when I retired, I told myself that I wouldn't do anything that wasn't fun. This has turned out to be a *lot* of fun. I've learned a lot. In playing the game, though, I'm not very good (laughter). I'm still a novice.

CGW: *So, what was your first reaction when Sierra approached you about this product?*

The Chief: For years, I worked with mainframes, but my staff worked with PCs. The only games I had contact with were those reflex-oriented games for kids. When Ken Williams called me, I told him to send me the game and I'd run it by a couple of kids to see if I wanted my name on it. When he actually sent the *Police Quest* games, I thought, "Uh, oh! What have I agreed to?"

CGW: *What was your actual involvement in Police Quest 4: Open Season?*

The Chief: I started right from the beginning—looking at the script. They sent me the first draft and I suggested a lot of changes, particularly adapting the language they used so that it would be more like authentic police procedure. I originally thought the script was a pretty bizarre case. But then I thought back to some of the actual experiences that I'd had as a detective and thought of several that were even more bizarre.

CGW: *How many cases were you involved in as a detective?*

The Chief: That would be hard to say since I supervised all the detectives for eight years under [former Police Chief] Ed Davis, as well as when I was chief, of course. You know, every chief is a detective at heart. That is something that never leaves you. As a result, you sometimes drive the detectives crazy looking over their shoulders and offering your "suggestions."

CGW: *So, how realistic is Police Quest 4?*

The Chief: I'm very happy with the realistic aspects of the game. We made some compromises, of course. For instance, in a shooting where an officer is the victim [as happens in the game] we wouldn't have merely two officers, one detective and a criminologist. We'd be all over the place. As it is, though, there is more burden and involvement on the player. It probably has more of the feel of the old days when detectives were responsible for one case. Today, each detective is responsible for *too many* cases.

Anyway, the game points out that *systems* solve crimes. You gather a lot of information and clues. There are a lot of things that turn up that look kind of interesting and you may want to go off [on a tangent], but an officer has to stick to his focus to solve crimes.

CGW: *Will the player have to use actual police procedures?*



CGW Editor Wilson deliberates whether or not to play "bad cop" in CGW's interrogation of Chief Gates.

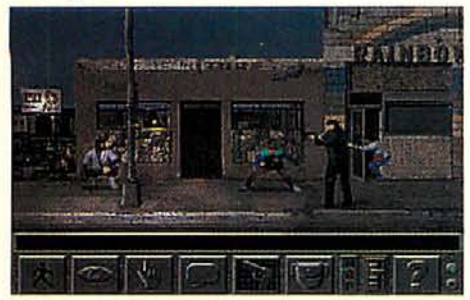
The Chief: Essentially, yes. One of the first things I did was encourage Tammy [Dargan, the Project Manager] to go through the L.A.P.D. manuals. I was surprised that she read them all. These are thousands of pages of fine print! The department manual comes in 5 parts and the homicide manual is pretty thick [indicating 3-4" with his fingers]. After she read them, she cross-referenced them for direct relationships to the game.

Tammy Dargan: For example, in Homicide, all paperwork for each case is placed in its own blue binder called a "murder book." When you go there, the desks and shelves are filled with these murder books.

In fact, the documentation is sectioned just like it was an abridged version of the L.A.P.D.

Department Manual. It's broken down into subjects, like the officer's oath, deadly force and Sam Brown belts. I didn't know before I read these manuals, for instance, that officers can wear velcro belts.

CGW: *What are the other realistic elements in the game?*



Tammy Dargan: One of my favorites is the shooting range. Did you know that you have to qualify once a month in real life? The range pictured in the game is the actual Police Academy shooting range for the L.A.P.D. It not only provides the player a chance to do better in the game, but also reveals the necessity of qualifying.

The Chief: That's right. If you don't qualify, you're suspended for a day, just like in real life. This sequence offers good evidence for why police officers want to switch from 6-shooters to 9mm guns [with 15 shots per clip]. They're trained to fire three round bursts per target: two to the upper body and one to the head.

I like this feature. The police department runs an officer through large-screen scenarios to teach them when to shoot and when not to shoot. The game is similar and will give the player some of that feel.

CGW: *Anything you don't like about the game?*

The Chief: Well, the language seems kind of unrealistic. "Bugger off" is not representative of what you're going to hear when you knock on a person's door and they don't want to talk to you.

CGW: *What's different about this Police Quest?*

Tammy Dargan: It's the first game where we've used a digital camera [Kodak's DCS-200] to capture the backgrounds, all of which are actual locations in Los Angeles, selected by Daryl. Then we video-captured the actors in 236 colors (20 colors of the 256-color palette were reserved for *Windows*) and transposed them over the top using a chromakey process.

CGW: *We've seen this product as it's come along and the lines around the characters seem much smoother than in earlier versions. Have you learned a new trick in handling the radial aliasing [smoothing the outside lines]?*

Tammy Dargan: Yes. Our 255th color is gray. We get smoother lines by dithering all of the outside lines with a gray dither.

CGW: *Since you used real sites, did you have to pay extra for their use?*

Tammy Dargan: We didn't pay site fees, but we did get releases from all of the building owners.

CGW: *Were there any sites that have particular memories associated with real cases?*



The Chief: Outside of Parker Center and the Police Academy? I can say that the opening crime scene isn't an actual one, but I've seen crime scenes identical to that one. And the map that you use to go from place to place uses the actual map and numbering system that is used by the L.A.P.D.

Tammy Dargan: There's the Shortstop Bar!

The Chief: Right, that's a story. Sierra

wanted a bar where police officers hung out. There was this one bar that I really hated when I was chief because a lot of officers hung out there, drank too much and got into trouble. When we asked for permission to use it in the game, the owner couldn't believe it. "The Chief wants to use my bar?"

CGW: *Speaking of sites and releases, we're curious. Did you have to get a license to use the L.A.P.D. name?*

The Chief: No, everybody does it—good *and* bad.

CGW: *Did the police department cooperate in the game?*

Tammy Dargan: They were very cooperative, thanks to Chief Gates. They took me up in a helicopter and we participated in establishing a perimeter. I found out that police helicopters orbit to the left all the time because there is always an observer on the left. On one occasion, we saw a perpetrator drop a knife after a gas station robbery.

CGW: *Are some of the more unpleasant aspects of police work simulated in the game? After the ambush does the character have to explain to Internal Affairs that it was a good shooting?*

The Chief: Actually, Internal Affairs doesn't investigate a shooting unless something seems irregular. It's the Officer-Involved Shooting Team that investigates and that is in the game.



Chief Gates chuckles as Tammy Dargan shares her real life experience in a police helicopter fly-along.

Tammy Dargan: Yes. After the ambush scene, the player's character is stripped of his weapons because they've gone to the S.I.D. for ballistics testing.

CGW: *What about that other unpleasant aspect of police work, dealing with the media?*

The Chief: Oh, that's in there, too. It's another compromise in that you only have to deal with one reporter instead of a whole group, but she makes up for it.

CGW: *She's a composite of all your worst nightmares?*

The Chief: You've got it.

CGW: *So, what's next for Daryl Gates. Are you going to consult on any more computer games?*

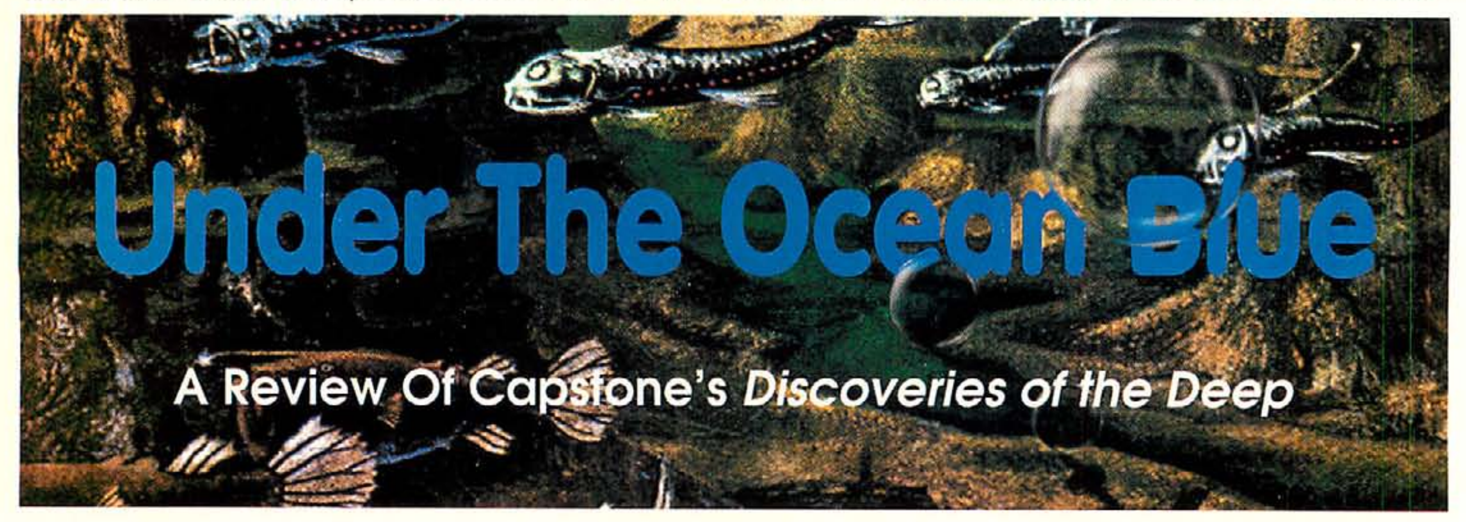
The Chief: Well, it's just like anything else, a lot of it is going to depend on how this one is received.

Tammy Dargan: Actually, we've thought a little bit about it. Chief Gates instituted S.W.A.T. (Special Weapons And Tactics) when he was with the L.A.P.D. and this would be an ideal opportunity to blend strategy and role-playing. Nothing definite has been decided, though.

The Chief: I have particularly enjoyed working with Sierra, though. I really appreciated their allowing us to put some D.A.R.E. [Drug Abuse Resistance Education] references in the game, and there is a public service announcement on the CD-ROM version of the game.

CGW: *We want to thank you for your time. Is there anything else you want to say about the game?*

The Chief: I think it's a tough case to solve. CGW

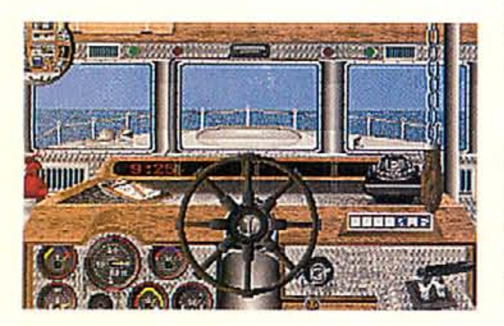


Under The Ocean Blue

A Review Of Capstone's *Discoveries of the Deep*

by Allen L. Greenberg

It is to the ocean we must now turn to satisfy our most basic needs. While food and various natural resources appear plentiful, we have no choice but to accept the fact the nearly 60 million square miles of land which occupy the planet Earth are no longer able to provide sufficient natural surroundings to satisfy today's population of computer game players. Similarly, the surrounding skies and the galaxy in which our planet resides, once thought to be limitless, now approach their capacity for dogfights, strategic bombing and interstellar conquest. Fortunately, **Capstone** now offers young computer users an opportunity to explore humankind's nearest and most evasive frontier, the sea.



Mucho Cousteau

Discoveries of the Deep (DOD) is an educational and entertaining piece of software that is designed primarily for school children. Far less complex than a submarine battle simulation, yet in many ways more colorful, it simulates deep sea exploration in portions of the Caribbean and Atlantic oceans. Players receive their instructions from the Manatee Harbor Oceanographic Institute based in Miami, Florida. A ship travels from the institute to an exploration sight where a deep-sea sub is then launched. These expeditions may take the player as far away as Spain, so that it is frequently necessary to stop at a port for fuel and supplies.

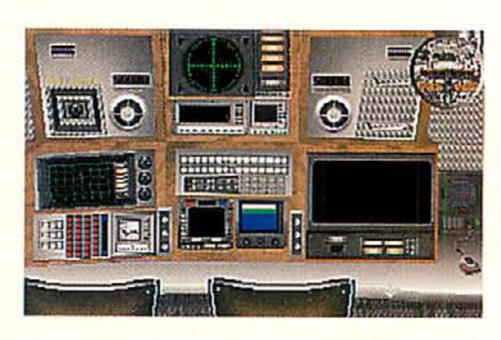
While it is possible to simply hop in the boat and explore some random location, the institute offers seven pre-defined assignments from which the player may choose. While the assignments vary in complexity, they are not ranked and need not be undertaken in any particular order. Regrettably, there is no role-playing aspect to the game, and no cumulative record is kept of the player's successes or failures. A successful mission entitles the player to view an on-screen certificate that vanishes after a single showing, like a single drop of rain on the ocean.

Finding the exact ocean location at which to submerge and explore the deep can be as challenging, though not quite as interesting, as the exploration itself. For each of the seven missions, the player is provided with a latitude and longitude. One of two ships are available for traveling there, one of which features a "flat" window while the other has an angled or "perspective" view. Steering these ships can, at first, be a frustrating experience. There is a lag of several seconds after the wheel is turned before a change in direction registers on the dashboard compass, so that oversteering is likely. Also on the dashboard is a true-time clock that is tied in with the game's graphics so that players will see the same day/night conditions on their computer monitors as appears outside their windows.

Due to the time involved, a real-time voyage is clearly out of the question. Once the ship has cleared the institute's docks and moved into the open sea, players may make hyperspace-like jumps of as much as 100 miles at a time. Still, a miscalculation of fuel, supplies or the undetected presence of some shallow waters may cost the player some tedious dead-time broadcasting pleas for help from the on-board radio. A recreation room is also available, which boasts a dartgame simulation and an arcade machine in which players enter a tank in order to destroy several helpless polygons.

The Implements Of Instruction

Within a special instrument room, players will learn the value of instruments somewhat more complex than the ship's compass. An electronic map and navigation station provides a greater wealth of information than any other location, and it is from here that the



"hyperspace" leaps are planned and initiated. The "sonar-magnetometer" is used to identify large objects or high concentrations of metal, while a "depth sounder" provides both a graphic and numeric indication of ocean depth at the ship's current location. While the workings of these last two machines are

Discoveries of the Deep



TITLE:	Discoveries of the Deep
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, 12MB hard drive space; AdLib Gold, SoundBlaster, PAS, Roland MT-32 sound cards supported
PROTECTION:	None
PUBLISHER:	Capstone Miami, FL (800) 468-7226

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obscure, proper use of the information they provide is certainly simple enough.

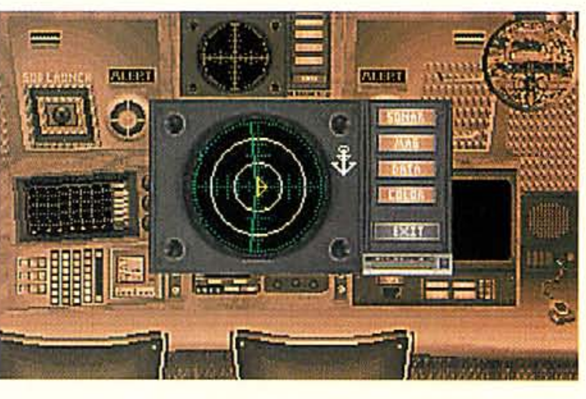
Players may also wish to keep a journal of both their travels and their underwater experiences. For this purpose, a clipboard and notepaper is available on the ship. Anything that is typed onto this document will be preserved as a permanent record. Since the player only has a limited time to remain underwater, it is often useful to note the exact latitude and longitude of areas worthy of further exploration. Also on board is a large map of the area onto which may be posted colored flags marking the journey, as well as areas referred to in the journal. Unfortunately, it is not possible to save a mission in progress to disk.

Once the player enters the hi-tech mini-sub, *Discoveries of the Deep* becomes far more interesting. Guiding the sub is not unlike piloting a slow-moving flight simulator, using the keyboard's directional keys to approximate the function of a joystick. Very precise readings of longitude and latitude are shown, as is a numerical display of the sub's heading and depth under the ocean's surface. The majority of the undersea display consists of a large circular window that looks out into the murky water. An external, underwater light diminishes the gloom for only a short distance beyond the window. As one might expect, movement seems sluggish at first. However, the throttle control is designed to allow the pilot to quickly build up momentum and then, when desired, bring the sub to a sudden and complete stop.

The most useful underwater device is a detection system that, when reasonably close, will lead the way to any object of sufficient mass. For particularly sentimental moments, plus certain missions which require visual documentation, the sub is equipped with an on-board photographic system. At any time, the player may request that the view outside the window be saved to disk as a photograph for later viewing once the player has returned to the Oceanographic Institute. Photos are normally taken with an underwater flash, which will often provide additional detail, although this feature may be disabled. Unlike the institute's congratulatory certificates, the photos are not erased from disk once they have been viewed.

In Search Of

The missions are primarily to observe and explore, with only a minimum of interaction with the undersea environment. Players will have the opportunity to study and pay their respects to the remains of the historic ocean liner "Titanic" which last saw daylight in 1912. Players will find this piece of sunken history in a condition similar to that in which it was actually found several decades later. Another ship, the "Capitana," along with the rest of the New Spain armada, became famous for safely carrying nearly $70 million in gold and jewelry to the ocean floor near the Florida Key islands in the year 1733. In *Discoveries of the Deep*, players will follow the salvage project which took place over 200 years later by locating the "Capitana."



The popularized Bermuda triangle is the setting for an attempt to locate the missing "Flight 19" which disappeared, somewhat mysteriously, in 1945. The attempt here is not so much to explain the disappearance, but to prove that the flight did not, contrary to some questionable journalism, terminate on some other planet's runway. Years later, Flight 609, bound for London from New York, was lost midway over the Atlantic. The cause for this plane's misfortune is believed to be hidden in its black box flight recorder, somewhere in the plane's submerged wreckage. It is now up to the player to find that black box.

The player is further requested to augment and corroborate some dangerous and fascinating research by entering the mysterious "Blue Hole" of the Bahamas. This area may once have been an above-water cavern, in which case it may contain stalactites. By photographing the area and returning with one of the stalactites, the player will advance the study of earth's early history. Another deep discovery took place five miles below the surface in the Romanche Gap where scientists were surprised to discover the presence of life under such high pressure. One particularly large creature caused quite a bit of interest when it appeared only as a blurred photographic image. The player is now requested to further investigate this creature.

The final mission involves an attempt to control a dangerous leak from a rusted container filled with nuclear waste material. The player's job is simply to sample the radioactive stuff by extending a mechanical arm over to the defective container. This mechanical arm is also necessary elsewhere in the program and requires the player to orient the submarine so that the arm, when extended, is able to reach out and fulfill its function.

Discoveries of the Deep features some colorful graphics, and its underwater scenery is often captivating. Were it a flight simulator, however, pilots would be quick to complain about its slow frame rate. Since it takes place underwater, one can more easily excuse its slow motion. However, slow motion need not be jerky motion, and a more fluid movement of scenery would have made the program somewhat more enjoyable.

The keyboard is probably the most convenient device for issuing the various commands, although a mouse is frequently useful. The program's designers are to be complimented for including extensive on-line help. The player may instantly call up either a short list of commands or several pages of extensive information.

Obviously, there is much more to oceanography than appears on this game's shimmering surface. Even the children for whom the program was designed may find themselves wishing for a more extensive or interactive experience with the creatures, fossils and other objects they find in *Discoveries of the Deep*'s waters. However, there is a lot to enjoy here, and many young minds may find their appetites nearly as whet as their diving gear. **CGW**





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A Spectacle Not To Be Myst

Brøderbund's Macintosh Adventure Makes The Most Of CD-ROM

by Christopher Breen

Anyone who has given more than a cursory glance at the popular media has seen that entertainment CD-ROM is the *Next Big Thing.* "MEGABYTE UPON MEGABYTE OF GRAPHIC DELIGHTS, HOURS OF ENTHRALLING DIGITAL AUDIO, BOLD ANIMATION, CAST OF THOUSANDS, SINGING WAITERS, DANCING BEARS..."

Bah!



The unfortunate fact is, many CD-ROM games are high on glitz and low on substance. That's why, when I began to hear the faint rumblings of an amazing new game from Rand and Robyn Miller, the creators of *Cosmic Osmo* and *Spelunx and the Caves of Mr. Seudo,* I was more than a bit skeptical. As it turns out, I was also more than a lot wrong. *Myst* is everything it's touted to be and is, quite simply, the best CD-ROM game currently available for the Macintosh.

Myst is a game of discovery. In order not to spoil it, I will reveal only these few plot details: Atrus, a rather talented author, has picked up a magical power from his father that enables him to write books that transport the reader—quite literally—to fantastic lands. So adept at this skill is Atrus that he has stocked a good three shelves of Myst Island's library with these magical tomes. With horror, Atrus discovers that his books are being destroyed and his fantastic lands ransacked. The population of the island being confined to the writer and his two sons Sirrus and Achenar, suspicion for these nefarious deeds rests heavily on one of his progenies. Filled with remorse, Atrus flings himself and the book linking the outside world to Myst Island into a large fissure. Somehow this powerful book makes its way to the player, who is left to unravel its mysteries.

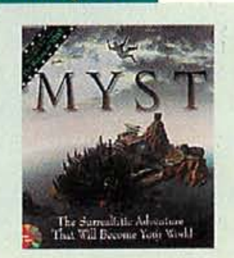
Cracking open the book with an innocent mouse click, one is instantly transported into the adventure via an aerial tour of a hazy, tree-encrusted Myst Island. After this brief QuickTime flight over the stunning landscape, the perspective shifts to the island's dock. From here, one must explore the island, solve puzzles that gain access to other lands, and gather clues to reveal the identity of the book-destroying perpetrator. As it turns out, this is not a particularly easy task.

Myst is one of those games that offers virtually no initial instruction—the information provided in this review is actually a bit more than the player will glean from the manual and the back of the box. Although this can be confounding at first, a quick jaunt around the island is enough to provide sufficient information to begin the game proper. One of the charms of the game is that the player experiences the freedom to make discoveries at his/her own pace in a non-threatening environment. There is no game clock, the puzzles need not be solved in any particular order, and nothing in the game will cause the player's character to meet an untimely end. That's right! The game is open enough to allow anyone to try any boneheaded thing they desire like without fear that Something Really Bad is going to happen.

HyperCard Hits Hyperspeed

Most current Mac games available on CD-ROM are put together with Macromedia's Director, a program that, among other things, provides developers with a highly sophisticated animation system. The drawback of Director is that the processing requirements for the animation slow down the already poky CD-ROM performance. The Millers elected to forgo this route and take another, more familiar, path. Although they have experimented extensively with Director, Rand and Robyn chose to use their old buddy HyperCard as the engine to drive *Myst.*

Myst



TITLE:	Myst
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	Macintosh with CD-ROM
REQUIREMENTS:	8-bit 256-color Macintosh, CD-ROM drive, 3MB hard drive space, 4MB RAM (2.5MB free RAM), System 7.0.1 or higher
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Rand and Robyn Miller for Cyan, Inc.
PUBLISHER:	Broderbund 500 Redwood Blvd. P.O. Box 6121 Novato, CA 94948 (415) 382-4400



Because *Myst* is HyperCard-based, it has a different look than games created with Director. Each scene is presented as a 3-D rendered, stationary backdrop. Any animation that may occur is contained within QuickTime windows that are seamlessly integrated into that backdrop. Navigation is controlled by clicking on the screen in the direction desired. Likewise, objects are activated by clicking or, in the case of levers, clicking and dragging. When one moves from one location to another, each scene cross-fades to the next. If these fades seem too slow, it is possible to opt for fast transitions that fling one directly into the next scene.

Although it may seem as if the Millers are not taking advantage of the latest and greatest whiz-bang technology, working within the



limitations of HyperCard actually enhances the game. *Myst* isn't a shoot-'em-up, so there isn't a pacing problem. Besides, a good deal of the player's time is spent staring at the screen and tapping thoughtfully on the ol' noggin. There's really no need for fully animated Director sequences when one has such pleasant scenery, along with Chris Brandkamp's soothing environmental sounds, and the delightfully diverting toys scattered throughout the game.

Don't get me wrong: *Myst* doesn't ignore the elements that make CD-ROM the Next Big Thing. Like any worthwhile 462-megabyte game, *Myst* plays to the strengths of the medium. It boasts 66 minutes of QuickTime animation, over 40 minutes of original music, megabytes of digital-audio sound effects, and 2,500 ray-traced images that will, on occasion, cause one's jaw to drop in admiration. The difference between *Myst* and some other CD-ROM games is that the technology is not the star of the show. Yes, the graphics are mesmerizing, the live-action QuickTime sequences are stunning, and the musical score, cinematic in its scope, enhances the feel of the game without being intrusive, but *Myst* is more than just a collection of sparkly graphics and stirring sound. The substance of the game is every bit as good as the package.

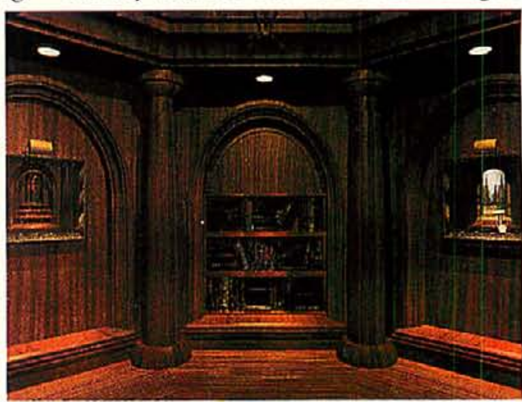
The danger inherent in fantasy/adventure games is that, all too often, plot lines become convoluted and farfetched. Not so here. *Myst's* narrative is straightforward and simple enough to be believable, given the surreal nature of the surroundings. In addition, information that drives the plot is released at an even pace—the gamer's pace. One doesn't feel as if someone tacked on a harebrained ending simply to tie up loose ends.

The puzzles, like all good puzzles, are tough but fair. One need only pay attention to everything going on within the immediate vicinity (well, perhaps a little musical training and a compass would help too). Observation, both aural and visual, is the key. There's not an unjust trick in the bunch, and once the puzzles are figured out, players are likely to smite their forehead mightily and wonder why they didn't get it hours earlier.

The Complaint Box

I hate to knock a product that is bound to set a new standard in Macintosh CD-ROM games, but I do have two small complaints. First: When one clicks the cursor to the left or right side of the screen, the perspective turns either 90 or 180 degrees, depending on whether the designers thought it important for the player to see what is to the side. I understand that some of these views might seem extraneous, but in some areas the scenery is so similar that one can become too easily disoriented. This results in extra clicks between one scene and another to determine the exact location.

Complaint Two: When a game in progress is saved and later restored, the player is transported to the opening location of the scenario. Although everything accomplished up to the point of the save is still intact, the player may have to travel a fair piece across the island in order to return to the spot where the game was saved. This occurs more often than would be expected, because much of the information needed to complete a task is contained in books stored on Myst Island, and the only other way to retain that information is to scribble it down. For lazy sods like me who are unwilling to



transcribe page after page of text, this means restoring a game saved from Myst Island, looking something up, re-restoring to the first location, and then tramping back to where this all began. Fortunately, it is possible to ameliorate this situation somewhat by switching into Zip Mode, an option that allows paths to be traversed in a few leaps rather than several steps.

An Instant CD Classic

Along with the CD-ROM (which, in addition to the game, contains a 14-minute QuickTime movie of the making of *Myst*), the game package includes a notebook for jotting down observations and three game hints to get the gamer started. Should these hints be insufficient, **Brøderbund** offers the *Myst Official Game Secrets* hint book for $14.95. Personally, though, I can't understand why anyone would want to rush through the game by getting an easy answer; with *Myst's* graphic beauty, lush sound, and compelling plot line and puzzles, it's over all too soon. **CGW**



A Note From The Editor

By Peter Scisco

KIDS & COMPUTERS

Change is in the air. We hear that phrase a lot from Washington. We read the same words in papers and magazines. But as we move through our lives day by day nothing much seems different. Not so at *Kids & Computers*. Change is a reality.

Recently, technology publishing giant Ziff-Davis acquired Golden Empire Publications, the publisher of *Kids & Computers* and the magazine you hold in your hands, *Computer Gaming World*. If you're a *CGW* subscriber, this may be your first introduction to *Kids & Computers*. Briefly, we are dedicated to helping parents and kids harness today's technology for their benefit now and in the future. In this special section, you'll find reviews of some of the latest educational, creativity, and entertainment programs geared toward kids.

If you're a *Kids & Computers* subscriber, you might well wonder what has happened to your magazine. That's where the change comes in. We have decided to revamp *Kids & Computers*. We look forward to a more responsive, assertive, informative, and attractive magazine in 1994. That requires us to step back and regroup, to assess our goals and determine how best to achieve them.

But it also requires something of you, our faithful and enthusiastic readers. It will require some amount of patience as you wait for *Kids & Computers* to reemerge. Don't let this time go idle. Use it to communicate your needs and wishes for a new *Kids & Computers*. (I'll give you an address at the end of this column.)

Not everything has changed here. In the most important elements, the song remains the same. *Kids & Computers*, along with its new publisher, remains committed to presenting timely reviews, opinions, and reporting to parents who are concerned that their kids be prepared for the information age.

Now let's turn our eyes to this special section of *CGW*. Inside, you'll find the latest crop of kids software reviewed by our educators and writers—people who make it their job to know kids, know teaching, and know technology. When you step into the computer stores this holiday season, or when you go thumbing through the software catalog looking for just the right piece of software for that special child in your life, you're likely to be swamped by the sheer number of titles available. The Software Publisher's Association marks educational software as the fastest growing area of the software publishing business. I can attest that the number of programs crossing my welcome mat is astonishing.

New ideas and new approaches to learning are evident everywhere. As the editor of *Kids & Computers*, as a father, and as a volunteer in the public schools, I think it's more important than ever that all kids have access to these new technologies. Equally important, adults and kids need to share the possibilities and opportunities made available by new technology so that they can build a path together into the next century.

It occurs to me as I write this that the kids in the elementary school half-a-mile away will be leaving high school at the start of the next century. What we do now, as parents, friends, guardians, and teachers, will make a big difference when the numbers spin round to 2001.

I only need to see the faces of those kids light up when I enter the classroom to understand the potential of computers and software to influence their learning. And I hope that in the coming few years we will learn better how to harness this technology so that it can be integrated into classrooms and into lessons. It's one thing for a parent to buy a program for the computer at home, when scheduling isn't so much a problem, when the needs of a child are clearly defined. It's another thing altogether when computers are seen in school as just another subject to teach, rather than accepted as a tool to enable learning.



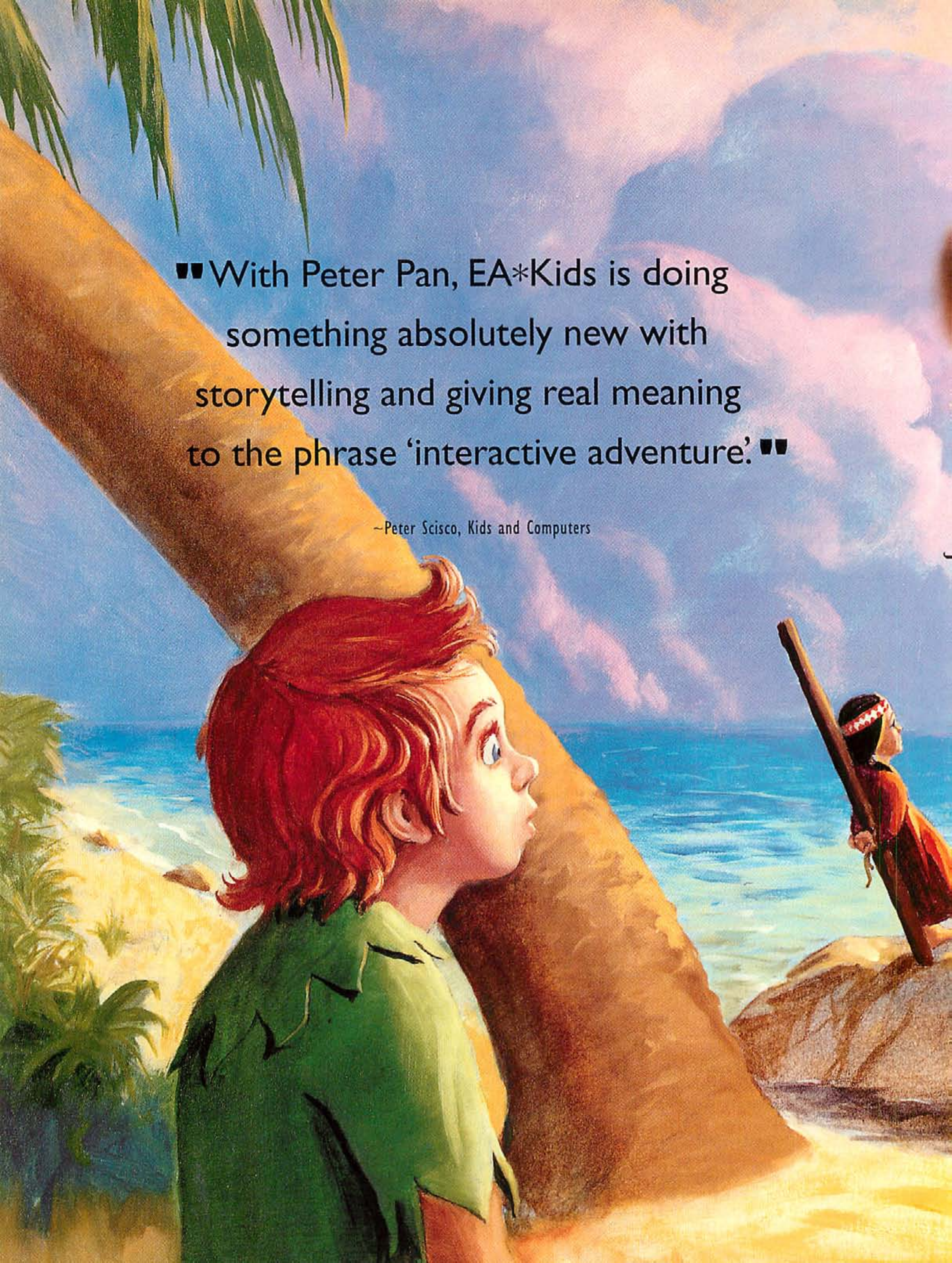
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Reviewed This Month

The Amazon Trail, 20th Century Video Almanac, Amy's Fun-2-3 Adventure!, Slater and Charlie Go Camping, Sir AddaLot's Math Adventure, Mighty Draw, Stickybear's Early Learning Activities, A.J.'s World of Discovery, Kid CAD, EZLanguage for Windows, The San Diego Zoo Presents: The Animals!, Discover Space, Bailey's Book House, My Own Stories, Ready, Set, Read, Mayo Clinic's Family Health Book, The Deluxe American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition, Wayne's World,

From the letters I have received in the last year, it's evident that many families and teachers have come to the same conclusion. And it's evident from their comments that they need a magazine like *Kids & Computers* because they simply can't find enough of the information they need anywhere else. I ask that those writers, and the many others who read our magazine and look forward to it arriving in their mailbox, remain patient during this change. I also ask that you write. Let us know what you need and what you'd like to see in *Kids & Computers*. Address your correspondence to Editor, *Kids & Computers*, PO. Box 730, Yorba Linda CA 92686-9963.

We'll be listening. In the meantime, I wish you a joyous and peaceful Holiday Season. K&C


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~Peter Scisco, Kids and Computers


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Gary Rogers /© Corel

The Amazon Trail

An invitation to the sights and sounds of the Amazon jungle awaits every child who savors exploration, discovery and danger. This educational adventure game sends kids into the wilds of South America, with splendid animation and authentic native music. Kids see and hear the mammals, birds, fish, and insects of the rain forest from the relative safety of their computer canoe. All the while, they are looking for a medicinal plant that can save the ancient Incas.



The Amazon Trail

Price: $59.95

In Brief: An interactive science/geography/history simulation centering around the flora and fauna of the Amazon River basin.

Requirements: IBM or compatible with 1 MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 7.5MB free space; mouse; DOS 5.0 or higher.

Audio Support: Ad Lib, Sound Blaster, and compatible sound devices.

For ages: 10 to 16

Other Versions: Macintosh ($59.95)

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Pirhana, headhunters, and greedy Conquistadors stand in the way of success. But the oddest and most compelling obstacle is the eerie blue mist that occasionally descends upon the player and transports him or her to another time. In this way, kids are exposed not just to the geography and ecology of the region, but to its history as well. They rub elbows with Henry Ford. They contact Theodore Roosevelt. Historical figures and events find their way into the game and into the minds of young players.

Strategy is important, as explorers must evaluate their progress throughout the game and make crucial decisions. Rationing the food to fit the pace is paramount to the success of the expedition, as is navigating the 11 rivers of the Amazon basin. A health meter displays the fitness of the party. Should sickness befall the expedition, resting a day or so might be a good idea. Trading with the local villagers entails making even more decisions.

The arcade portion of the game occurs both on land (investigate and survey) and in the water (navigate and fish). Each brings with it a real sense of environmental consciousness. On land, players use a camera instead of a gun to shoot animals, birds and bugs. The skill and fun are still high pitched: Kids must observe with a keen eye and target their quarry with the camera. When fishing, players are given the option of releasing the fish after classifying it. Pictures of captured land and aquatic specimens are then referenced in the Amazon Guidebook and identified. On sound-equipped computers, proper pronunciation of the species can be played. All information goes into a scrapbook for evaluation at the end of the game. A shield garnered with jewels representing the animals and plants identified attests to the success of each expedition.

The use of sound and the animated sequences make severe demands on computer hardware. Computers designed for today's multimedia software shouldn't have any trouble running the game, but older computer models may suffer from slower performance.

With *The Amazon Trail*, kids learn critical planning skills, gain a sense of historical development along this important river, and have the opportunity to sharpen reference and research skills. And they get all of this in the form of an entertaining adventure that's sure to keep their interest.

— Jeff Kingston

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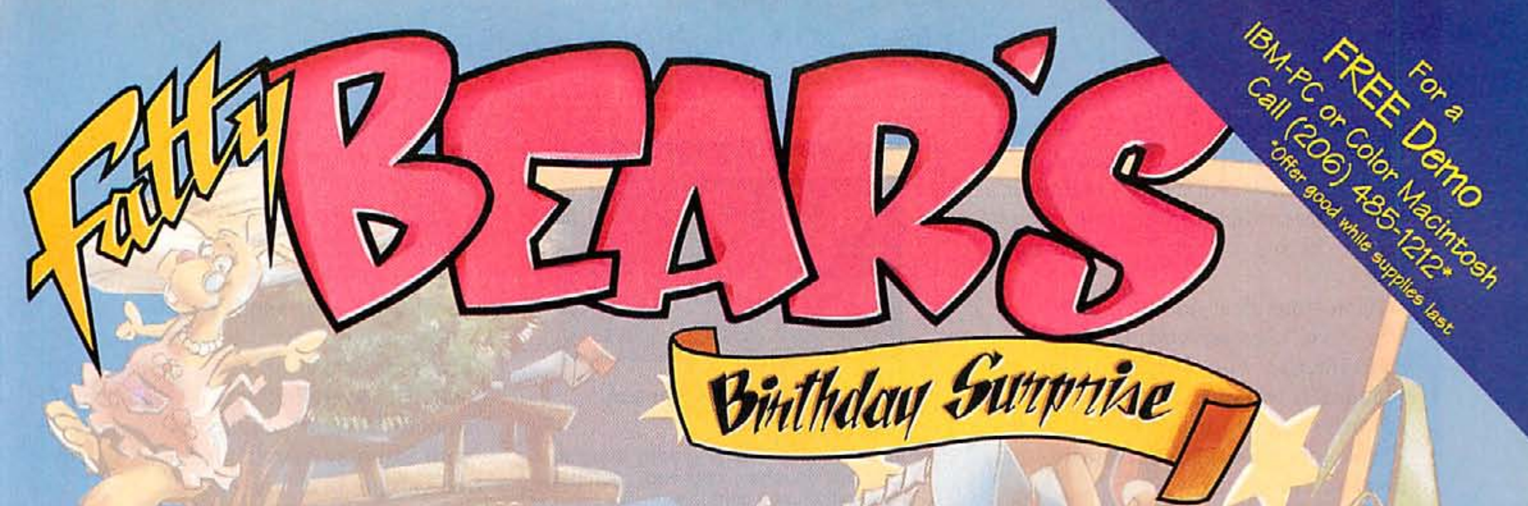
In Brief: A multimedia examination of the important events and people of the Twentieth Century — first in a five-disc series.

Requirements: IBM compatible 386SX or better with 1MB RAM; SVGA display; hard disk.

Audio Support: Pro Audio Spectrum, Sound Blaster, or compatible devices.

The Software Toolworks
60 Leveroni Ct.
Novato, CA 94949
(415) 883-3000
Circle Inquiry #181

In this introductory collection, students can tap into this information base of Twentieth Century history from a timeline, which shows eight pictures of events as if they were frames on a film strip. Starting in 1890 with early motion pictures and the development of the automobile, the timeline moves forward





Fatty Bear and his friends have a lot to do before Kayla wakes up. Matilda Rabbit's busy with the cake. Gretchen's working on the decorations. The puppy's getting into mischief, and the garage door opener has disappeared.

Fatty Bear's Birthday Surprise™ is an adventure game designed especially for children. Children enhance their problem-solving skills, while happily exploring Fatty Bear's world; the goals even vary in response to your child's actions.

So, what are you waiting for? Morning's almost here, and a bear can only do so much alone.







Circle Reader Service #150



Humongous Entertainment™ Creating software that doesn't underestimate your child. Available on Disk or CD-ROM for Macintosh and IBM PC systems. SRP $49.95 Disk/ $54.95 CD-ROM. To purchase, visit your favorite software retailer or order direct from Humongous Entertainment. 13110 NE 177th Pl. Box 180, Woodinville, Wa. 98072. (206) 485-1212.

to 1990 and such subjects as the sentencing of Michael Milken and the decline of American cities. Along the timeline, it's possible to move back and forth, even to leap to the end or beginning of the timeline.

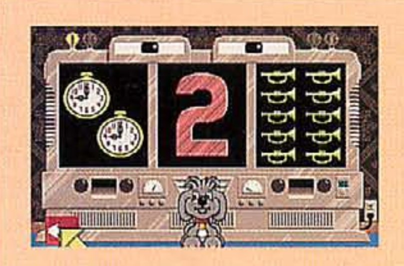
Photos are clear and of high quality. The video clips are equally impressive and effective. Old film clips look and sound old, while newer clips show the advances in audio and video technology. The major drawback is that the information can't be printed.

The program's search feature can be accessed through the Library icon. Kids or parents can search for a particular word, view the information by category, or investigate the subject index.

From Babe Ruth to the Beatles, from Benny Goodman to Thomas Edison, from Presidents to princesses, this program covers them all. It's an excellent reference for kids and parents alike — and fun to boot.

— Joel Schwartz, M.D.

Amy's Fun-2-3 Adventure!



Amy's Fun-2-3 Adventure!

Price: $39.99

In Brief: This engaging early-learning program teaches counting, number recognition, and comparison skills.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster, and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 2 to 6

Devasoft
P.O. Box 41250
San Jose, CA 95160
(408) 927-9645
Circle Inquiry #182

What better way for children to learn counting and numbers, than assisted by a lovable puppy? Amy, star of Devasoft's *Amy's Fun-2-3 Adventure*, leads kids through four progressively challenging episodes that help beginners grasp what numbers are all about.

Younger players will want to start out in Amy's doghouse — literally! After clicking on any of the numbers above the doghouse, the child is rewarded with an animated example of the number. The program also provides verbal cues, as a pleasant female voice repeats the number, and then counts up to it.

Next, kids help Amy check out a friendly computer named Marty, who plays a matching game. Marty displays a random number, and then offers two sets of objects, one of which adds up to the number shown. To make a match, children must recognize the number Marty has generated, and be able to count the objects in the sets. This teaches comparison skills, as well as number recognition and counting.

The game also offers a journey to Cookie Castle, where Amy is helping with a repair project. Children are prompted to drop a brick into a numbered position, dictated by Amy's silent counting on her paws. This is a bit more challenging than the first two games, as there are no verbal cues. Kids need to tally Amy's count themselves, then locate the correct number in order to place the brick.

An additional segment allows kids to play a variety of familiar children's songs on Amy's xylophone, which has numbered keys. The notes are cued by the program; kids can also play their own compositions.

The program's animation runs smoothly with bright, attractive graphics and crisp, engaging sound. The manual is helpful and straightforward, Overall, *Amy's Fun-2-3 Adventure* is well done, and should appeal to eager young minds.

— Dennis McCauley

Slater and Charlie Go Camping

Camping trips can supply a family with anecdotes for a lifetime. But no matter how exciting that last campout was, it probably couldn't hold a candle to the outrageous adventures of the cartoon protagonists in this interactive storybook.

Like most good storybooks, this one is all fun. There's no pressure on the kids to learn to count, pronounce carefully selected diphthongs, or identify the color purple. Each passage is read aloud; some are followed by a brief animated sequence.

Once the page has played out, the great big white hand that signals *wait* changes to a big black cursor arrow. That gives kids a clear indication of when they're free to mouse around the screen looking for hot spots. When they find one, they'll be regaled with another cartoon treat. These tidbits expand upon the main illustration which, in turn, amplifies the text. The overall effect is a remarkably smooth blend of children's storybooks with Saturday morning cartoons — and the kids are in charge of the action.

That action is exactly what we've all learned to expect from cartoons: an irreverent blend of slapstick, pratfalls, and cheerfully gratuitous but silly violence. Slater and Charlie themselves are so sweet, and their antics so good-natured, that even the most timid children will enjoy their adventures without feeling threatened. And even politically correct adults will have trouble containing their laughter.

Slater and Charlie Go Camping is the sort of program that kids will want to run over and over again, but for those times when they can't use the computer, Sierra has packaged a working compass and a genuine picture book version with the software. Kids won't have to leave Slater and Charlie behind — even when they go camping.



Slater and Charlie Go Camping

Price: $49.95

In Brief: A pair of lovable dinosaurs take children on a hilarious camping trip in this interactive storybook.

Requirements: IBM or compatible with 2MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk; mouse; sound device.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum, Disney Sound Source, Roland MT-32, and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 3 to 8

Sierra On-Line
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(800) 326-6654
Circle Inquiry #183

— Virginia Soper



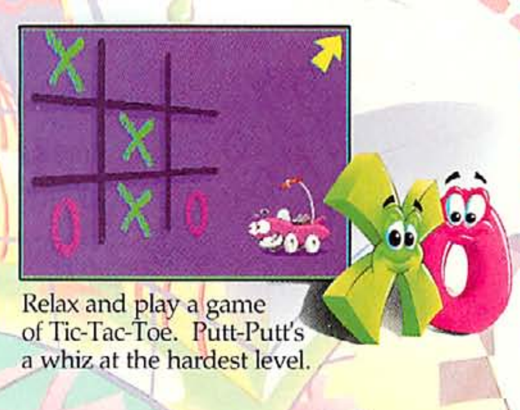


Everyone's favorite little car is back, and this time he's playing games.

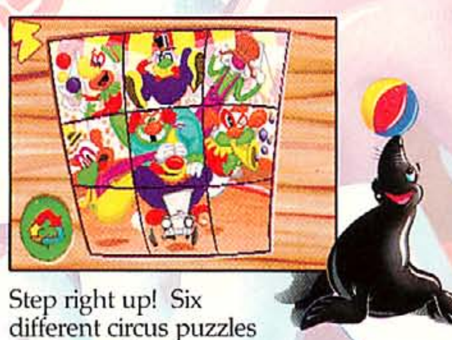


Whether an advanced speller, or just learning the ABC's, this game has a level for everyone.

- Select from four different skill levels
- Practice matching and pattern recognition
- Sharpen letter and spelling skills
- Develop logic and spatial relationship abilities
- Designed for ages 3 - 8
- Have a lot of fun!



Relax and play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe. Putt-Putt's a whiz at the hardest level.



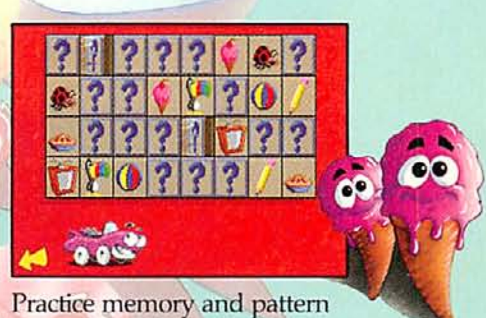
Step right up! Six different circus puzzles are just a click away.



Create your own pinball machine, and play away!



King me! Putt-Putt's a patient teacher who's always ready to play again.



Practice memory and pattern recognition skills. Putt-Putt provides plenty of support and encouragement.



Humongous Entertainment™ Creating software that doesn't underestimate your child. Available on Disk or CD-ROM for Macintosh and IBM PC systems. SRP $39.95. To purchase, visit your favorite software retailer or order direct from Humongous Entertainment, 13110 NE 177th Pl. Box 180, Woodinville, Wa. 98072. (206) 485-1212.

Circle Reader Service #166



Sir AddaLot's Math Adventure

Under the guise of battling dragons, this educational game helps students master number skills and basic math equations.

Each of the game's levels displays 16 squares, each with an addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division problem. The player must solve the equations to advance inside each of 25 castles to save them from Scorch, the dragon.

An added incentive is a picturesque moat, which players create as they successfully progress through the levels. At the end of each level, players select an item to place in the moat. It can be a fish, plant, sea creature or treasure, depending on the level. Animated sequences, such as swimming fish, enliven the moat.

Sir AddaLot's Math Adventure includes an activity book keyed to the game that players can use without being at the computer. The activities include coloring, word searches and puzzles. Answers are in the back of the book.

Parents and older children can easily set up the game using the Options Menu. Younger players will need assistance. The Options Menu controls the speed, sound, high score display and mouse. Game settings also control the difficulty level. These range from practice to level five, the hardest.



Sir AddaLot's Math Adventure

Price: $19.95

In Brief: A simple math drill program for basic number skills.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or better) with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 2.1MB free space; DOS 3.3 or higher.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster; Disney Sound Source; Audio Pro, Roland MT32; and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 6 to 12

Landmark Solutions
P.O. Box 80520
Fort Wayne, IN 46898-0520
(800) 543-7947
Circle Inquiry #184

While not as glamorous or as technically stable as some other math programs, *Sir AddaLot's* under-$20 price tag makes it appealing to parents looking for a basic math drill program.

— Jack Germain

Mighty Draw

From the time they start teething on car keys to the day they drive off to college, kids get a special sense of satisfaction from mastering adult tools. A good paint and draw program can put them in the driver's seat when it comes to using the computer. Abracadata has designed *Mighty Draw* with the whole family in mind.

Steady-handed preschoolers can use the line and sketch tools to scribble in one color and watch while a second color fills in the outlines they've drawn. Since choices of colors and line breadth must be preset from the menu bar at the top of the screen, they'll need some help from their parents. Young kids will also enjoy

typing with the program's text feature, especially in 30 point boldface.

School-age children will enjoy exploring *Mighty Draw*'s symbol libraries, choosing images to embellish their creations. These older kids can also make more sophisticated use of the line and shape tools. They may enjoy making their own sets of flash cards for school and matching games just for fun.

Adolescents should be able to master all the functions that *Mighty Draw* can perform. The scholars among them will appreciate the professional touch that pie charts, bar graphs, and column charts can give their science reports. Come Valentine's Day, young lovers can turn the computer into a private printing press, creating personalized greeting cards. If they're asked nicely, the teens might even help Dad lay out those genealogy charts he promised for the family reunion.

While *Mighty Draw* is certainly not ideal for very young children or professional artists, it's a good all-purpose art program that should serve kids for many years.

— *Virginia Soper*



Mighty Draw

Price: $49.95

In Brief: A general purpose graphics and drawing program for kids and adults.

Requirements: IBM or compatible with 640K RAM; Hercules monochrome, CGA, EGA or VGA display; hard disk.

Other Versions: Windows ($59.95); Macintosh ($49.95)

Abracadata
P.O. Box 2440
Eugene, OR 97402
(503) 342-3030
Circle Inquiry #185

Stickybear's Early Learning Activities

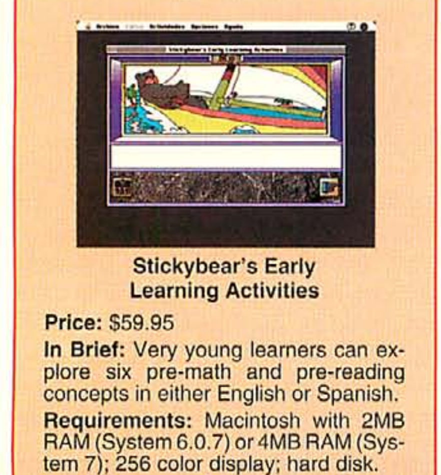
What do little kids want to be when they grow up? Bigger kids, of course. And what do big kids have that little kids covet? An education — believe it or not.

Stickybear has a new program for those young learners. In *Stickybear's Early Learning Activities*, he'll guide them through a clutch of pre-math and pre-reading activities that will hone their cognitive skills. All six games have free play and directed activities in English and Spanish. That's 24 ways to learn and have fun.

For each game, the screen is divided into two parts. The upper register is a picture window into Stickybear's animated world. The lower third always displays the buttons that allow the kids to navigate the game. In the Alphabet and Counting activities and the free play mode of the Opposites game, this register contains the buttons children use to indicate their choices. In the Shapes game, this panel has a shapes scorecard that shows which shapes have been located and which are yet to be found. In the Colors and Shapes games and the structured mode of the Opposites activity, children click on the pictures to make their choices. At the top of the screen is a small box kids can select to

switch from free play to structured games and back again.

Stickybear is at his very best in the Counting activity, during free play. Kids can choose a number for the program to count out. Then they can raise or lower the ante by clicking the up or down buttons. Three bunnies can add up to nine even faster than, well, bunnies. To add to the fun, there's no telling which cartoon Sticky will choose to represent the chosen numeral. Youngsters have an added incentive to play longer and explore more numbers, hoping to catch their favorite characters in action.



Stickybear's Early Learning Activities

Price: $59.95

In Brief: Very young learners can explore six pre-math and pre-reading concepts in either English or Spanish.

Requirements: Macintosh with 2MB RAM (System 6.0.7) or 4MB RAM (System 7); 256 color display; hard disk.

Audio Support: Optional recording capability with System 7.

For Ages: 2 to 6

Optimum Resource
5 Hiltech Lane
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926
(800) 327-8008
Circle Inquiry #186

The weakest game is Opposites. The concept itself is hard to illustrate, and the problem is compounded, in free play, by the mouse. Impatient clickers aren't going to appreciate the difference between *go* and *stop*, for instance. And with the inevitable time lag that occurs while the computer loads animated scenes, a quick clicking youngster may end up believing that *a bajo* means *up high*.

Stickybear gives youngsters broad control over the pace and responsiveness of the program. The exception is the choice between English and Spanish. Mom or dad will have to help out there. No matter which language the kids are using, Stickybear's right at home. In the world of early learning software, it's difficult to find anyone who does it better.

— Virginia Soper

A.J.'s World of Discovery

Any parent looking for a way to sneak a few basic math or reading skills in with their child's standard fare of video games will be pleased to discover *A.J.'s World of Discovery*, where candy rewards grow on trees and a character named A.J. provides all the mechanical guidance most four to seven-year-olds will need. But don't wander too far from the computer, as A.J.'s no substitute for an observant parent.

The main program consists of ten activities, two of which are designed to build early reading skills. The Writing Game is a simple typing tutorial reinforcing spelling and sentence completion skills, and the Picture-Maker involves matching words to pictures to create either a country landscape or a scene from outer space.



A.J.'s World of Discovery

Price: $49.95; Lesson Disks: $19.95 each

In Brief: An interactive series of game-oriented exercises designed to build early math and language skills.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 6MB free space; mouse.

Audio Support: AdLib, Pro Audio Spectrum; Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Thunderboard and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 4-7

Bright Star/Sierra On-Line
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(800) 326-6654
Circle Inquiry #187

The remaining activities include a computerized version of Mr. Potato Head, a racetrack, an electronic coloring book, a paddle ball game, and a jigsaw puzzle. There are also examples from four Math and Language Lesson Disks, which are sold separately. These additional Lesson Disks each contain 15 activities similar in format to the Writing Game and the Picture-Maker.

A.J.'s World can help to build math and language skills if the child finds the exercises entertaining. Most of the program's educational content comes on the Lesson Disks. Parents seeking to help their kids develop these skills should choose a Lesson Disk carefully, and plan on purchasing it soon.

— Tommi A. Troia-Griffin

Kid CAD

Imagine your kids building a house, castle or fort with electronic building blocks; decorating it with bubble gum or ice cream cone wallpaper, supplying furniture and pets (dinosaurs are optional) — all in three dimensions on the computer screen. Then imagine them demolishing what they've built with lasers, bubbles or lawnmowers. And think of no mess or clutter to clean up afterward!

Kid CAD is the real thing, not imaginary. It's an electronic building kit with all the features and capabilities of a real CAD (computer-aided design) program, but scaled for kids.



Kid CAD

Price: $49.95

In Brief: A 3-D building kit with grown-up features and just-for-kids fun.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or better) with 4MB RAM; VGA or SVGA display; hard disk with 10MB free space; mouse; Windows 3.1.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster and compatible sound devices

For Ages: 7 and up

Davidson & Associates
P.O. Box 2961
Torrance, CA 90509
(800) 545-7677
Circle Inquiry #188

The program opens to an animated panorama of a farm, town or city setting. Kids will enjoy clicking on horses that whinny and windmills that spin, as well as discovering the many other interactive features of these first screens. They can then choose whether to build in a city, town or farm. First-time engineers may want to look at one of the sample files, which include houses, mazes, ten-

PAINT UP A STORM

Or a stork

Or stretch your imagination with PaintPower. This easy-to-use graphics tool gives you the versatility and creative latitude of programs costing 2 or 3 times more.

If you've ever considered painting or drawing with your PC, PaintPower is the program you've been waiting for. It gives you the power to paint, color, sketch and trace—adding textures, shadings, patterns and other "special effects" previously found only in the most expensive paint programs.

PaintPower was designed for easy access by aspiring artists of all ages. It's a creative playground for the younger set and an electronic "studio" for the art student or at-home artist.

Learning By Doing
From the moment you install PaintPower, the program's on-screen Help windows explain every option in clear, jargon-free language. Right from the start you learn by doing—choosing and using the many creative tools at your fingertips.

Start by selecting from a palette of 256 colors. Then choose a brush tool or line-creating tool from the Tool Bar and begin freehand painting. As you proceed, the screen displays your drawing board, painting tools and Color Palette.

Or a stallion

You can modify you work as you go—manipulating the image with powerful tools that let you cut and paste; fill areas with colors or patterns; shade and blend; or zoom in for detailed touch-up. When you're ready to look at a hard copy of your work, you can print it in screen-size, larger or smaller.

One Up On The Cave Man
PaintPower also contains an extensive library of clip art, background art, curves, geometric shapes and type styles for text. You can import images from other programs, including most popular graphics files (PCX, GIF, TIFF). And export to other graphics programs, such as our new PrintPower Pro Plus.

Every artist since the cave man has developed artistic skills by constantly experimenting. The beauty of PaintPower is the way it lets you try different brushstrokes, colors, shadings and patterns-until you arrive at your best creative expression. So before you know it, you're painting up a storm.





Available at your local Software Retailer
to order call 1 (800) 447 6543 MC/VISA/AMEX

Circle Reader Service #149



nis courts, checkerboards and other layouts and creations. Each of the samples can be modified.

Kids can start their buildings from the ground up, or chose from a set of ten prefab structures (houses, mansions, farm buildings, apartment buildings). They can select from complete foundations or use building blocks that snap into place. Windows, doors, yards, and other objects are available simply by clicking on the item and dragging it to the building site.

Once the outside is built, kids can zoom in to work on the interior. The program supplies a huge variety of paints, textures, people, plants and animals, all geared toward kids. Building tools allow kids to easily erase, move, copy, link, unlink, rotate or hide objects with the simple click of a button. With the program's multiview capabilities, pint-sized engineers can also pan the entire scene in four different directions, zoom out, rotate the camera 180 degrees or tilt the camera to see the design from a bird's-eye or ground-level view. These are all important components in grasping the concept of spatial relationships.

Kid CAD is a very sophisticated program, and demands a lot from the computer. A complex drawing may take a few minutes to redraw, but it is well worth the wait. Small changes (like switching pets from dogs to dinosaurs) are handled immediately. Davidson has put a tremendous amount of thought into designing a product that not only spurs creativity, but is sophisticated enough to meet the demands of budding architects or engineers.

— Felicia Donovan

EZLanguage for Windows: Spanish and Japanese

Both parents and kids will have a blast learning foreign languages with these programs that will replace those headphones and language lab tapes. The programs do not teach language basics, such as verb tenses and conjugations, but rather teach the vocabulary and phrases needed for travel to foreign countries. The EZLanguage series is designed as multimedia software, but doesn't require a CD-ROM drive. Each program will occupy about 8MB of hard disk space.

The introductory menu screen offers eight areas of study: Basic Phrases, Arrival, Eating Out, Shopping, Sightseeing, Hotel, Public Services, and Sports. Each lesson starts with panels of simple words, shown with a drawing that suggests the word. The English word is written below the picture, the target language word is above. Either can be hidden with the click of the mouse.

Click on the picture or the written words to hear a native speaker pronounce the word. A good strategy for students is to hide the target language word, read the English equivalent, then listen to the native speaker say the word. Then, display the words in the target language to complete the learning process.



EZLanguage for Windows

Price: $49.95 each

In Brief: This enjoyable multimedia drill program teaches common Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, or Japanese words and phrases. (Each language sold separately.)

Requirements: IBM compatible with 2MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk; Windows 3.1 or higher.

Audio Support: MPC-compliant sound card required for speech, but is optional; microphone required for recording responses, also optional.

Other Versions: Windows CD-ROM — All six languages on a single CD-ROM disc that sells for $99.95.

Future Trends Software
1508 Osprey Dr., Suite 103
DeSoto, TX 75115
(214) 224-3288
Circle Inquiry #189

After a few eight-word panels comes a phrase drill, offering typical guidebook phrases in both languages. The phrases start with the simple (*yes, no, thank you*) and move to the more complex (*Do you take credit cards?*). The native speaker's renditions become increasingly important in this more taxing territory.

After a dozen or more drills, the program tests the student on the nouns and phrases covered in the previous lessons. The colorful drawings and sounds denoting correct and incorrect answers make the tests fun.

The EZLanguage recording option is a boon for studying. Using a microphone, the computer records the learner's pronunciation of the words and phrases. Matching the student's version with the native speaker's version quickly reveals differences, allowing the student to mimic the correct accent.

Kids will enjoy the challenge of remembering the words and phrases; adults will enjoy the useful knowledge they're picking up. As long as your family is interested only in words and phrases, and can leave the formal grammar for more structured study, the EZLanguage series offer a quick path to a useful vocabulary.

— Richard O. Mann

The San Diego Zoo Presents: The Animals!

The San Diego Zoo and its companion facility, the Wild Animal Park, are renowned as one of the world's finest zoo complexes, due in part to their innovative ways of displaying and teaching about animals. Now that unique style combines with computer technology to produce a multimedia zoo.



The San Diego Zoo Presents: The Animals!

Price: $99.95

In Brief: A multimedia visit with the San Diego Zoo's mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 1MB RAM; VGA display CD-ROM drive; hard disk with 2MB free space, MS-DOS 3.3 or higher, MSCDEX 2.1 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Pro AudioSpectrum, or Ad-Lib Gold 1000/2000

Other Versions: Windows CD-ROM (MPC compatibile) — $99.95; Macintosh CD-ROM — $99.95.

The Software Toolworks
60 Leveroni Ct.
Novato, CA 94949
(415) 883-3000
Circle Inquiry #190

Using more than 120 video sequences, 1,300 color photos, two hours of audio, and more than 1000 written pages, *The Animals* delivers an encyclopedic knowledge of the animal kingdom in an entertaining way. Animal lovers young and old will visit this virtual zoo over and over again with delight.

The program begins with an aerial view of the zoo park. The mouse cursor highlights program choices, which include the world's ten *biomes* (tundra, savanna, tropical rain forest, and seven more) and the specialty areas, which include the Kids' Corner, Tour Bus, Story Theater, and others.

Each biome exhibits the animals found in that environment, including related special exhibits. Working through the list of animals invariably leads to related topics, presentations, and exhibits that'll keep zoo visitors endlessly entertained and enlightened.

Not everything in the zoo is narrated; only selected special exhibits, movies, and introductory items are read aloud. The developers have chosen to include more animal sounds and movies than simple expository readings. This decision allows for more written material.

Special features provide thematic ways to attack the zoo's information. Kids' Corner, for example, includes a quick tour of baby animals, an animal sound quiz, and even a dinosaur exhibit.

The Tour Bus offers nine tours, including Animals in Disguise (a series about protective coloration) and Jaws, Claws, and Creature Features (a series about horns, claws, antlers, and other distinctive animal parts). The Nursery teaches, with movies and text, about caring for newborn animals in captivity. Storybook Theater tells detailed true stories about zoo happenings, such as the birth and nurturing of Gordy the Gorilla. The Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species shows an extensive series of exhibits and movies explaining the Center's work in preserving near-extinct species.

A visit to the Library provides lists of all multimedia elements in the zoo. Pictures, sounds, movies, maps, and so forth are listed for quick access.

Visitors to the San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park never have enough time to experience everything they'd like to see. This CD-ROM title lets animal lovers revisit the Zoo time and again, to explore the far-flung, lesser-known corners of the facility—without getting bitten.

— Richard O. Mann

Discover Space

This computerized astronomy book and star chart lets kids and their parents set up star charts, probe the sun or the planets, retrace the history of space exploration, view deep sky objects, and fly along with comets and asteroids. The program makes good use of graphically superb animated sequences.



Discover Space

Price: $39.95

In Brief: An animated database of cosmological information, with a review of super power space programs.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA or Super VGA display; hard disk with 7MB free space.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster and compatible sound devices.

Broderbund
500 Redwood Blvd.
Novato, CA 94948-6121
(415) 382-4639
Circle Inquiry #191

The best part of *Discover Space* is the section on star maps. Kids can examine the heavens with or without a skyline, set the horizon with city or country landscapes, even adjust sky brightness for light pollution. Adjustments to the view help to find objects and to zoom in or out. When kids print star charts, they can add star names and their choice of constellation outlines or mythological pictures. The planets are also plotted on the charts.

The program's section on planets lets kids and parents watch any body of our solar system rotate on its axis. The mouse can be used to fly over a planetary map to identify features. Vital statistics and unique features can be examined; wait until kids start making comparisons between the planets — the animated astronaut is a treat to watch.

The Sun section also includes some interesting animation, although the solar eclipse demonstrator is flawed. During this review, the moon eclipsed the sun, then moved off in reverse. Deep Sky Objects includes photos and text, but avoids an animated stellar evolution sequence. Missing is any discussion of variable or binary stars. The program's asteroid-collision lets kids program the size and speed of an asteroid, then displays the collision's crater over a comparably sized city or state.

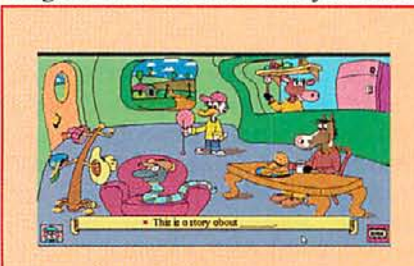
The program's remaining sections consist mostly of photographs and text. The Space Exploration section covers almost all planetary probes, even rarely mentioned ones like the Ranger and Surveyor from the sixties. Soviet, European and Chinese rockets, probes and manned space programs are covered, in addition to America's program.

Despite some flaws, kids can discover a great deal about space with *Discover Space*. Even when the rest of the program loses its glamour, the star charts will remain useful for years to come.

— Larry Krumenaker

Bailey's Book House

This entertaining pre-reading program combines five different activities into an integrated and charming whole. Everything starts and ends at Bailey's combi-



Bailey's Book House

Price: $64.95

In Brief: An engaging literacy program for pre-readers.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; EGA or VGA display; hard disk; mouse.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster, Disney Sound Source, and compatible devices

For Ages: 2-6

Other Versions: Macintosh ($64.95)

Edmark
P.O. Box 3218
Redmond, WA 98073-3218
(800) 426 - 0856
(206) 556 - 8484
Circle Inquiry #192

Get your kids the Hottest New MATH game!

Sir AddaLot's MATH Adventure

But with a retail price of only $29.95 it won't burn a hole in your pocketbook!

Sir AddaLot's
MATH
Adventure

Ages 6-12





Help Sir Addalot defend the Castle!









Each of the five levels have new and exciting castles to explore.



Match the equations while dodging the fireballs in this dazzling arcade style game.

Our fun filled demo is available for just $4.00 by calling 1-800-543-7947

Attention Kids

- Face the fierce Dragon, Scorch
- Help Sir AddaLot break the Castle's spell
- Create your own moat
- Track high scores for comparing with friends
- Experience 256 color animations
- Great sound effects and music

Attention Parents

- Helps kids improve addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division skills
- Separate equation and dexterity controls allow kids of all abilities to enjoy the game
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American Heritage Dict	72
BannerMania	23
Elementary Grade Builder	19
Elements of Style	42
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Grade Quick	52
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nation living room, library and workroom. Kids start by clicking on Bailey, who is quietly sitting in his favorite chair reading a book. He introduces himself, then invites kids to play in his book house.

The program's typewriter game introduces the keyboard to very young users. In the divergent (many correct answers) mode, a click on any letter will result in a cute animation. In the convergent mode, kids must find a particular letter on the keyboard. Tabitha the giraffe will help if kids have trouble finding the right key.

The Edmo & Houdini activity invites youngsters to play with position words like *in*, *behind* and *on*. In the Read-A-Rhyme game, kids get to finish five different Mother Goose rhymes in silly ways.

There are also two printer related activities: Kid Cards and Make-A-Story. Children use Kid Cards to create cards (what else?); in Make-A-Story, kids can design a storybook with multiple-choice endings, using their own illustrations.

Adults can modify the program to suit individual children. Just about everything can be controlled, from the layout of the keyboard in the Typewriter game to the kind of printout Make-A-Story produces.

Bailey's Book House combines the best of educational theory with a loving attention to detail and an engaging presentation. Kids will be completely enchanted by the warm voice and attractive graphics. This one is a real winner.

— Leslie Eiser

My Own Stories

My Own Stories is an excellent way to motivate reluctant writers or introduce children to the magic of desktop publishing. It features an extremely easy to use interface consisting of menus, buttons and icons. Even children with reading difficulties can use the program. All the stories are based on real experiences, and set in real locales that kids can identify with.

To make a personal storybook, kids first create a Title Page, which can contain information like the story title and author, and be decorated with a colorful border. Next, kids put together the pages of the story. Each page can contain just text, or an illustration with a few lines of writing below.

Creating the illustrations is an especially motivating experience for children. Scenery is made by mixing or matching background and foreground



My Own Stories

Price: $49.95

In Brief: Children can create their own illustrated story books.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386 or better) with 1MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk; mouse.

Audio Support: AdLib, Sound Blaster and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 8 to 14

Other Versions: Macintosh ($49.95)

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scenes. For example, children can choose a highway picture for the foreground and mountain peaks for the background. The computer automatically combines the two images to create a landscape.

Once the scenery has been selected, children can place objects on top (more than 500 different objects are available in several categories). Objects can be edited in several ways, including changing the skin and clothing color on the child and adult figures. Objects can be resized, flipped horizontally, and placed on top of each other.

Once the scenery is complete, the writing begins. The lower portion of the screen can contain several lines of text. Kids can switch between font styles to enliven their publishing efforts. The entire book can be edited by inserting, deleting, copying, and swapping pages.

An excellent feature of the program provides proper spelling for each of the objects in the scene. For example, when a child is writing a story, he or she can select the object and click on a *spell* button. The software inserts the name of the object into the story.

Integrated music and sound capabilities add life to electronic storybooks. Books can also be published in traditional fashion, on paper.

My Own Stories is a powerful learning tool allowing children to write about their own experiences. The illustrations make wonderful story-starters for reluctant writers, and can help any youngster with the writing process.

—Gerald Crisci

Ready, Set, Read

There once was a princess who turned to her toy chimpanzee and jack-in-the-box for help in learning to read. Jack and Bananas succeeded so well that now they're applying for tutoring work on your home computer. Parents might remember the pair's first effort, called *Alphabet Blocks.*

In their latest appearance, *Ready, Set, Read*, this whimsical teaching team presents six drill-and-practice exercises that sharpen skills in sound, letter, and word recognition, give practice in alphabetizing and rhyming, and teach syntax. Jack and Bananas greet kids right at the start, in a hallway, in front of six doors. The aspiring reader chooses any door, and the game begins.



Ready, Set, Read

Price: $49.95

In Brief: Bananas the chimp and his pal Jack-in-the-Box coach youngsters through six phonics games.

Requirements: IBM compatible (386SX or better) with 4MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk; Windows 3.1 or higher.

Audio Support: Sound Blaster and compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 4 to 7

Other Versions: Macintosh ($49.95)

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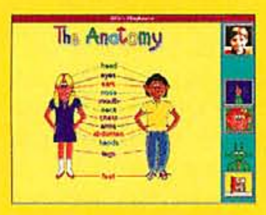
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Each room contains, besides one of the tutors, a chalkboard, a wall border with a decorative frieze, game equipment, and a light switch. Either Jack or Bananas explains the game, displays the game pieces, and challenges the children to click on the appropriate answer. There's no fooling around in Banana's and Jack's classes. They put their students to work immediately, and each exercise is timed.

Within this framework, the program offers lavish rewards and encouragement. Each correct answer earns praise and a banana or jack-in-the-box from the classroom frieze. Incorrect or slow responses cause options to disappear, limiting potential mistakes. Jack and Bananas are as enthusiastic about the choice of the last remaining option as they are about the quickest picks. The only way to miss out on a reward is to refuse to answer at all. If that happens, the program moves to the next problem.

After each right answer, a cartoon figure trundles across the screen. Eight right answers, each accompanied by praise, popping Jacks, zipping bananas, and cartoon antics, earns a brass band fanfare, a fireworks display, and an invitation to play again. A click on the light switch sends kids back to the hallway to choose another game. They can exit by clicking on the stop sign.

One of the nicest things about this program is that kids keep most of their rewards. Once they've earned an icon from the frieze, it's theirs to play with at the click of a mouse. The animation rewards respond to the child as well, changing their shapes and antics at the child's whim.

This feature compensates for the program's single-minded focus and the absence of any free-form discovery options. Parents, particularly those whose children have a hearing deficiency, will want to keep the tempo slow to maximize the amount of time their children can spend questioning Bananas and Jack. It is, after all, the program's faultless realism in speech that sets *Ready, Set, Read* apart from other early reading programs.

— Virginia Soper

Mayo Clinic's Family Health Book

The *Mayo Clinic Family Health Book* is a multimedia version of the health reference book of the same name. But this isn't merely a book copied to a CD-ROM disc. The creators spent quite a bit of time developing the interface, and bringing the pictures and sounds into a seamless reference package. Be prepared to devote quite a bit of time to exploring the nooks and crannies of this software behemoth.

As a comprehensive medical index for the general public, parents can use it for reference, or let their children use the fantastic anatomy section to learn about the human body. The program's anatomy section shows a diagram of a person. A "slider" bar allows the user to "peel away" layers — from the skin, to the muscles and organs, to the bones. At any time, point-and-click on a body part for a detailed description of the part, its function and its relationship to the body as a whole.



The Mayo Clinic Family Health Book

Price: $59.95

In Brief: A multimedia reference to health and body information, and to first aid tips.

Requirements: Macintosh with 4MB RAM; color display; CD-ROM drive; System 6.0.8 or higher; QuickTime extensions 1.5 or higher.

Other Versions: Windows CD-ROM ($59.95)

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Most items in the book feature a written entry, as well as some combination of photographs or drawings, QuickTime movies and audio. As a bonus for children, the computer narrator can read aloud just about any text, be it a chapter entry or a picture caption. The narration is rendered in an easy to understand computer voice. Audio levels do vary

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from segment to segment, which can be slightly irritating.

The program's Image Index features a glossary of medical terms, diseases and parts of the body. Click on a glossary item — *athlete's foot, heart pacemaker, vasectomy*, for example — and you'll clearly see (sometimes grotesque) pictures (or diagrams where appropriate.) The computer narrator explains what you're seeing.

The disc also contains a first aid reference; however, don't count on consulting it in a real emergency. By the time the program loads, the victim is likely to be long past the need for first aid.

Installing the Macintosh version, reviewed here, is fairly simple. For best results, copy the main program to your hard disk. The program requires the QuickTime extensions, but those utilities are not on the CD-ROM itself. Parents can get the extensions, free, from an on-line service or from an Apple dealer.

No medical reference is without omissions, including this one. For instance, although there is information about AIDS, there isn't an illustration of HIV, the AIDS virus. But even if the Image Index, which contains a wide variety of obscure and common ailments, is not complete, the program as a whole is genuinely useful for study and reference.

— *Kevin Savetz*

The Deluxe American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition

Students—and adults—think that using dictionaries is a pain. The *American Heritage dictionary* on disk relieves the agony of searching for that exact entry. The program is ideal for high school and college level work. It should be in anyone's computer who writes reports or has to use the English language intensively for work.

This electronic word database, which includes *Roget's II Thesaurus*, makes it easy to become an expert wordsmith. The combination is unbeatable. The program makes it quick and simple to look up multiple words, confirm alternate spellings, read multiple meanings and find synonyms for each alternative. It even provides a pronunciation key for each word.

One very useful feature is WordHunter. It's a reverse dictionary of sorts. Instead of typing in a word to see its meaning, type in a definition to find words. This is a great way to build an eager student's vocabulary. By typing in two related words with parameters like "and," "not" or "or," WordHunter will find other words that have that meaning. For example, entering *trip* OR *tour* will produce *junket*.



The Deluxe American Heritage Dictionary, 3rd Edition

Price: $129

In Brief: This on-line reference tool has more than 200,000 words and a peppy search engine for alternative spellings, synonyms and definitions.

Requirements: IBM or compatible with 4MB RAM; EGA or VGA display; 15MB hard disk space; Windows 3.1 or higher

Other Versions: A smaller Standard Edition requires 6MB of hard disk space. It sells for $59.95.

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Circle Inquiry #196

Several other features give this program advantages over the print edition. One is abbreviations. Type in, for example, *CPU* to find its relationship to a computer. The biographical and geographical dictionaries are also fantastic sources. Students just type in a historical name or place to get an identification. Curious highschoolers can type in a college name to get its location. Wild card searches let students and parents use a question mark or asterisk for unknown letters — the program will compile a list of possible words.

Like the excellent print edition, the computer version includes details about a word's Indo-European roots. The Deluxe Edition also has information on word etymologies, usage notes, regional notes, world history and antonyms. The last word on this dictionary: an excellent resource for the entire family.

— *Jack Germain*



WANNA PLAY?

Grab your pea-shooter— Mr. Wilson needs our help!

It all started at Mr. Wilson's party when my pet turtle, George, dove into the punch bowl. Everyone went nuts: Mrs. Bloopie jumped on Mr. Campbell's back... Mr. Campbell dropped his plate on Mrs. Melarky's toe... Mrs. Melarky spilled her chicken wings on Mr. Botsworth's lap... Mr. Botsworth poured his soup on Mrs. Gaylord's canary... Then, when no one was looking, Switchblade Sam made off with Mr. Wilson's prize coin collection. Now I gotta track down Sam and those coins...or ol' Mr. Wilson's gonna make turtle soup out of poor George!!!

Based on the 1993 Summer Blockbuster by John Hughes!

Dennis the MENACE



With Ruff by your side, and your trusty squirt-gun in hand, Switchblade Sam doesn't stand a chance!



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Wayne's World

This is one of the most educationally sound, creatively designed computer programs ever designed—*not*! The TV comedy sketch spawned the movie, which in turn has spawned this computer game for diehard Wayne and Garth fans. True to the sketch and the movie, the game is an unpredictable odyssey that doesn't seem to have any rules.

What passes for a plot concerns the mayor, who is cutting funds for Community Access Television. If Wayne doesn't get $50,000 in private donations in three days, his zany TV world will go off the air forever. Players must help the duo save their show.

Wayne's World resembles an interactive video arcade. The screens are recreations of scenes from the movie. Players watch a series of comments and retorts from Wayne and Garth that are spelled out on the screen. To advance to a new panel, players must select the correct response.

The game increases in intensity as players solve bits and pieces of the puzzle and wind up in more elaborate mazes. Game sessions can be saved and reloaded. There is no quick solution, and very little help.

For an introduction to computer adventure games, there are more compelling programs available. Adventure games can be educational, as they draw on creative problem solving techniques. And they can be creative, taking players on flights of fancy. But while some Wayne and Garth fans will find *Wayne's World* truly excellent, the rest of us will think it's bogus.

— *Jack Germain*



Wayne's World

Price: $49.95

In Brief: More of a novelty than a creative adventure game.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640KB RAM; VGA display; hard disk with 6MB free space.

Audio Support: Ad Lib, Roland LAPC-1, Sound Blaster, and compatible devices.

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Circle Inquiry #197

Autoworks

Autoworks is a great way for mechanically inclined kids to explore the automotive world without rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands covered with grime. The program isn't limited to kids—parents can also learn about the inner workings of the family car, too. And it's much easier than reading technical manuals. But, like driving, once kids get past the basics they will want something more.

Autoworks is an interactive information system that uses text and pictures. Users work at their own pace. They start with a full view of an automobile and work their through its major systems. The program doesn't insist on a set sequence. Users can start with any part of the car and move to another as interests direct.

JemmaSoft presents

CARTOONMANIA

Can you think of a software that is loads of fun, encourages creativity and produces a useful print-out? Probably not. However, this description does apply to a new program called CartoonMania.

CartoonMania is an easy to use software that lets you design and write your own cartoons. It contains a gallery of over 200 pieces of clip art from which you can choose sceneries, props and characters. The special graphics feature of CartoonMania enables the characters to change facial expression and body posture. To add a dimensional look to your scene, arrange and re-size the characters and props. Finish off your piece of work by writing your own dialogue. This program allows you to print your art work or save it as a TIFF, BMP or PCX file.

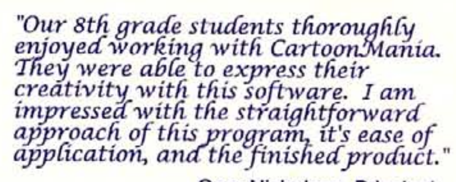
CartoonMania offers an endless source of entertainment by stimulating the creative side of both children and adults. Younger kids get a kick out of arranging and coloring their art work, making their own story or coloring book. Teenagers and adults will enjoy designing unique letters, greetings, invitations and posters.

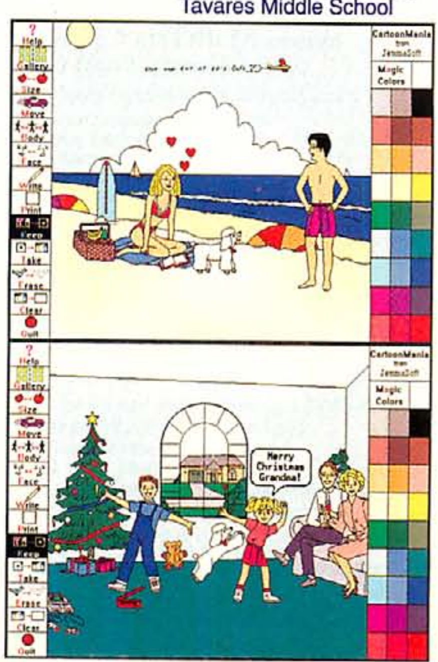
CartoonMania requires a PC with DOS 3.0 or higher, VGA or EGA monitor, and a hard disk. The suggested retail price is only $39.95. Registered users will have the opportunity to purchase additional clip art at extremely reasonable price.

Visit your local software dealer today or call (904) 483-2934 and mention CODE 20 to receive a special discount.



Screens taken from a VGA monitor. JemmaSoft and CartoonMania are trademarks of JemmaSoft.





Circle Reader Service #152

The screen is divided into four main parts. A picture shows the selected system. As each part's name in a list on the right side of the screen is clicked, a line jumps to show that part on the picture.

A row of menu options sits atop the screen. Each menu item offers further choices. Under this menu row is another row of icon buttons. Each button selects another mechanical system.



Autoworks: Key to the Mechanical Mystery

Price: $69.95
In Brief: Explore the world under the hood without getting your hands greasy.
Requirements: IBM and compatibles with 640KRAM; VGA display; hard disk.

Software Marketing
9830 South 51st Street
Building A-131
Phoenix, Arizona 85044
(602) 893-3377
Circle Inquiry #198

The program shows each automotive system in a dual view: profile and overhead. This makes it easier to view the car's working parts in perspective. A zoom-in button enlarges the picture. As the user moves the cursor across the picture, the name of the automotive part beneath the cursor appears at the bottom of the screen.

Some of the menu items provide brief historical glimpses of the automotive industry. Other options provide animated sequences of the car's working parts and a game module—essentially a quiz.

The testing portion of *Autoworks* is the most educationally useful, as it reinforces knowledge of car parts. However, the quiz game is limited to testing memory—not very challenging. All things considered, *Autoworks* is a well-designed program that does what it sets out to do. It won't turn kids into backyard mechanics or explain the rules of the road. Those limitations give it a potentially short life span.

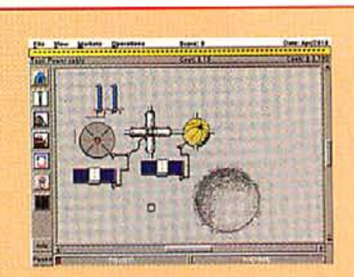
— Jack Germain

Lunar Command

The moon is a harsh place. There's no atmosphere, no water. Harmful solar and cosmic radiation constantly zaps the surface. Temperature goes from above boiling for two weeks to hundreds of degrees below zero for two more.

But, then again, there's no place like home. *Lunar Command* is a computer simulation that allows kids to manage a lunar colony. What they don't bring to the moon, they have to make.

As base commander of this colony, the player decides what kinds of buildings are needed and how many. What labs are needed for scientific research? What about manufacturing plants? What about the fuel to power the buildings and the staff to run them? Where will those people live? They can't exactly park an RV on the lunar plains.



Lunar Command

Price: $59.95
In Brief: Manage a lunar colony in this colorful simulation.
Requirements: IBM compatible 386 or better with 2MB RAM; VGA display; hard disk.
Audio Support: Sound Blaster or compatible

Mallard Software
3207 Justin Road
Flower Mound, TX 75028
PHONE TK
Circle Inquiry #199

Kids can build houses easily enough. But what about food? It costs money to import food—about $3000 a pound. It takes money and time to build a greenhouse and grow food. Greenhouses need water. A player can get that from a mining or manufacturing operation. But that needs more power. Tradeoffs and planning are the key to maintaining a lunar colony—strategic and creative thinking combined with careful management.

In *Lunar Command*, kids have to weigh the checks and balances of management. Players have 10 years of funding to find the right combination of buildings, cut expenses, and increase

revenues from lunar products and tourism. Lunar citizens can die from mistakes. After 10 years, the money stops—the colony can only survive if it's self-sufficient.

But managing a static colony isn't the real challenge. Dealing with the unexpected is. A lunar lander crashes. A meteor hits a power plant. A labor strike is called. The program provides all the information needed to make decisions. Data regarding market conditions, power use and generation, heat, budget—all are available in graph or table form whenever needed. But the software can't call the shots—that's up to the player.

A short, direct user's manual is complimented by a decent 80-page space novella. The story lets players see how things can be done, or ought to be done—or how things should not be done. The story is so good one wishes it were longer.

Lunar Command is suited for kids in middle school and older. And though it's a simulation now, there may come a time when kids will need these skills for real. In the meantime, creative thinking and strategic planning are always in demand. So are worthwhile computer games. This is one.

— Larry Krumenaker

Ready for Letters



Reader Rabbit's Ready for Letters

Price: $49.95

In Brief: A delightful program that teaches pre-schoolers to identify objects, letters and shapes, early language skills, and other concepts.

Requirements: IBM compatible with 640K RAM; VGA display; hard disk.

Audio Support: AdLib and Sound Blaster compatible sound devices.

For Ages: 2 to 5

The Learning Company
6493 Kaiser Dr.
Fremont, CA 94555
(800) 852-2255
Circle Inquiry #200

Make learning letters a fun and meaningful experience for pre-readers and first-time computer users with this early-learning program. *Ready for Letters* follows the popular Reader Rabbit to his grandparents' cottage, where kids join in six entertaining activities that have been carefully constructed to develop critical pre-reading skills.

The program provides a delightful environment with all the intriguing elements for learning and exploration. There are many wonderful surprises waiting to be unveiled. Clicking the mouse on anything and everything guarantees success. The player is enticed to explore freely, while learning to identify objects, letters and shapes by sorting through or investigating their similarities and differences with respect to color, pattern, and size.

At the Hoppy Hollow pond, for example, children can prompt the animated animals to pop out of hiding and play musical instruments (this element is comparable to a game of hide and seek, a favorite of this age group).

Inside the cottage are five rooms. The kitchen and the workshop engage the player in goal-oriented tasks. The child can help grandma find the ingredients necessary to prepare a delicious snack or work at grandpa's workshop matching shapes and colors. The bedroom engages the player in a more self-directed goal. The youngster can decorate the room with different combination of colors, patterns and designs. In the bathroom and the picture parlor, the player is exposed to letters and simple words that communicate abstract relationships and comparative terms, such as *more*, *less*, *between*, and *beside*.

Ready for Letters is even more fun and effective when played on a computer equipped with an audio card. The sound effects and narration exercise the child's listening comprehension. Parents interested in helping their kids develop early language skills should hop right out to pick this one up.

— Jasmin Toroussian

Happy Holidays



David Ross/©Corel





by Neil Harris

Neil Harris is a former editor of the in-house magazine, Atari Explorer. *In this article, he takes* CGW *readers back to the days when* ***Atari*** *ruled the coin-op world via* ***Microsoft's*** *latest package of entertainment titles.*

Microsoft Arcade is quite a trip down memory lane. **Microsoft** has turned five classic **Atari** quarter-suckers from days of arcades past into amazingly faithful *Windows* renditions. *Missile Command, Asteroids, Centipede, Tempest* and *Battlezone* ingested billions of quarters in their heyday, and it's hard to imagine that any gamer over 25 years old doesn't remember at least one of these games fondly.

Memories can be deceiving, though. There is nothing inherently wrong with these games, taken in context. Unfortunately, their context is 1980, not today, and the accurate port from arcades of yore onto my modern *Windows* system left me feeling displaced in time. To a great extent, these games have been made obsolete by technology. Yet, as one of the *CGW* editors said, playing them today is like watching reruns of your favorite old sitcoms on *Nickelodeon:* they may be corny and technologically inferior, but they also have a somewhat perverse pleasure to offer.

For this reason, the package will sell like mad. I am convinced that there is a huge audience of players for these games, just like there was for the series of *Microsoft Entertainment Packs* that preceded them. It's hard to imagine, though, that the readers of *CGW* are the intended audience. We might be altogether too jaded to appreciate the experience.

And Battlezone Begat Spectre...

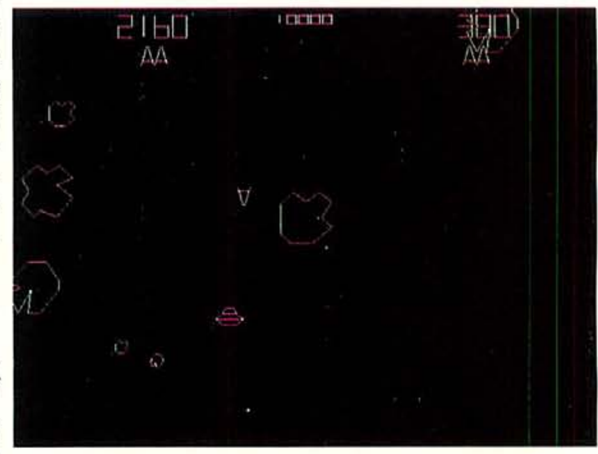
Battlezone was my personal favorite in this batch. It was one of the great vector graphic arcade machines, with wire-frame tanks and UFOs rendered in bright monochrome. It was the first game I fired up in this package. Yes, it certainly is *Battlezone.* The sound effects, the play action, everything is nearly identical to my memories of the original. It's possible to quibble that it's a bit harder in the computer version to avoid oncoming missiles, but that could be a mistake in my recollections and not a design miscue.

The thing is, it's been done better since. You would expect that. In these days of high-speed 486s with digital stereo sound and super VGA graphics, simulating vector graphics and one channel sound is a bit strange. People who like this kind of game have no doubt graduated to games like *Spectre* by now.

Missile Command: Nuclear holocaust for the entire family.

If It Moves, Kill It

Tempest was the hardest game in the pack to get used to. The original arcade machines used a controller that included a round knob that spun freely, allowing the player to position shots around the perimeter of the screen. Microsoft's designers use the mouse to simulate this. Moving the mouse side to side positions shots clockwise or counterclockwise around the playing field. I found a trackball to make this a bit easier, and eventually I had better luck with the computer version.


Asteroids: That graphic and sound extravaganza.

Missile Command is the game that holds up the best out of the batch. It adapts naturally to mouse or trackball control. Three keys on

Microsoft Arcade



TITLE:	Microsoft Arcade
PRICE:	$39.95
SYSTEM:	IBM with Windows 3.1
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX-20MHz or better, 2MB RAM, VGA graphics, mouse
PROTECTION:	None
DEVELOPER:	Dima Pavlovsky
PUBLISHER:	Microsoft Corporation Redmond, CA (800) 426-9400

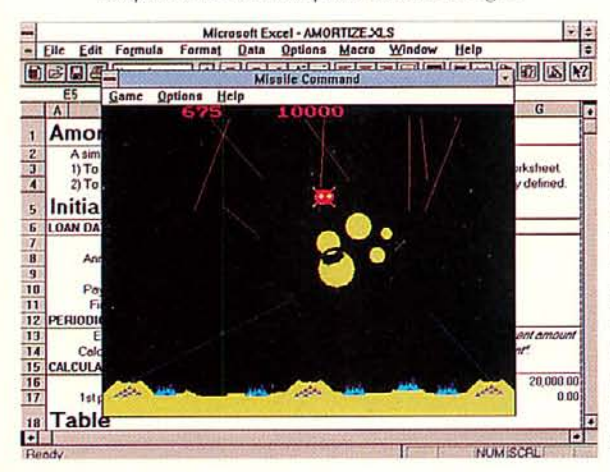
the keyboard replace the firing buttons for the three bases. I've seen a number of shareware knockoffs of this game over the years, but this adaptation works considerably better.

What Happened to the Dinosaurs?

Asteroids is the oldest arcade game in this batch, and it shows. There is not much to it. The strategy for racking up points is to shoot all the asteroids until there is only one small fragment remaining, then avoid it while shooting the flying saucers. This makes for a high scoring but ultimately dull game. Out of all the games in the pack, this one held the least play value. Perhaps there is a reason why the dinosaurs died out.

Finally, there is *Centipede*. I was never very good at this game. Perhaps it's because I never properly studied it. Most of the very best game strategy tips back in those days came from a typical arcade denizen, ten years old or so, with very short nerve pathways which yielded blindingly fast reflexes. (Surely the little punks couldn't have any other advantages.) With *Centipede*, I never found anything that worked.

Tempest: One of Shakespeare's classic designs.



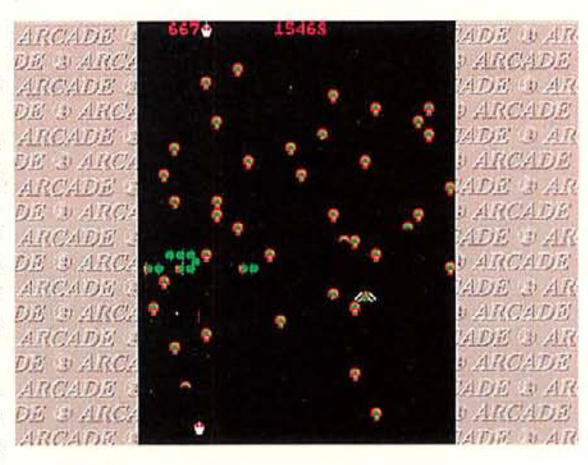
Playing an Arcade game over a spreadsheet allows for emergency exits.

Help for the Hopeless

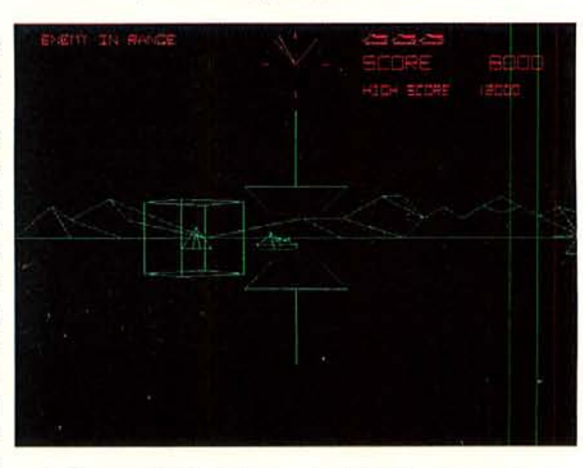
Microsoft's "Help" system for *Windows* came to the rescue. Accumulating the lost lore of those same ten-year-olds (doubtless now slaving away on a campus in Redmond, WA), there is much game strategy wisdom available for the touch of a function key. Reading through the help file for this game resulted in markedly improved scores.

After discovering this mother lode, it became clear that this is a major feature for this game pack. All the games are loaded with tips that reveal the most important tactics for each.

Another nice touch is the "boss key," which minimizes the game by simply hitting escape—although explaining why that spreadsheet was generating all those strange noises is an exercise left for the player (maybe it was the musical spreadsheet invented by a character in a Douglas Adams' novel?). All the games offer the player a number of customizing options. Adjust the number of lives, remove displays that slow down each game, and speed up or slow down play according to taste.



Centipede: The buggiest game on the market.



Battlezone: Can it be the same without the view-scope?

Overall, the implementations of these arcade chestnuts is nearly flawless. They play with the right speed even running inside *Windows*, although it's a bit prettier playing without them. The design work in adapting the original controllers to the mouse and keyboard is well-considered.

Software for the Nineties?

After taking a good look at all five games, I wondered if this wasn't just a generation gap issue. I'm a lot grayer now than I was when these games were created the first time around. Maybe it's just that I don't like this kind of game any more. So, as an experiment, I brought in a panel of experts, my two children, ages ten and seven. I know their nerve pathways are just right for these, and I've seen them glom onto the latest video games to the point where I had to beg to get the computer back.

They didn't get it.

It's not that they didn't understand how the games worked. They figured out all the rules fast enough. They just didn't see the point. The conclusion is that the only people who will go for this package are those of us who were part of the original arcade era, particularly those who didn't keep up with the state of the art. It's kind of like my sister-in-law who still buys Simon and Garfunkel records, even though they're on CD now.

Jurassic Park-Ware

I predict that this package will be an instant best seller. In a way that's a shame. This is almost an example of *Jurassic Park*-ware. The programmers have managed to recreate the dinosaurs in all their original glory.

Like the lizards on the page and silver screen, these games are out of their own time. I have to think that there is a lot more game play available on the market today. What might be nice is to apply the awesome brain power that went into porting these old games toward bringing them up to date. I'd like to see more than "museum-ware." I'd like to see *Battlezone 1994* with texture-mapped graphics, UFOs swooping down and kidnapping our women! Wouldn't that be something to see? **CGW**



A California Yankee In Queen Elizabeth's Court

CGW's Editor Visits The European Computer Trade Show

by Johnny L. Wilson

When I left New York, it was early evening. When I arrived in London, it was early morning. Yet, I had experienced more than a time change and a dose of jet lag in that Atlantic crossing; I had crossed a cultural divide. All my life I had simply viewed the British (little realizing how artificial that term sounds to those of English, Scottish and Irish ancestry) as an acculturated amalgam of proto-American culture. Upon arriving in England, I soon discovered that even with the similarity in language, it was a foreign country.

At first, I was amused by the minor differences between the U.S. and England. How quaint that we drive on opposite sides of the road! How marvelous that buildings from the 16th century stand amidst those of the 20th century! How neat to see a pub on every corner! How delightful to read the names of the traditional villages which make up metropolitan London! How superb to be passed by those double-decker buses!

Then I was struck by the presence of news agents everywhere I turned. The English (as the Irish and Scottish) must be a voracious nation of readers. Alas, as I began to read their newspapers and periodicals, a reality suddenly struck me. There seem to be more English magazines and newspapers per capita than there are in the States. Within those English magazines and newspapers, there tend to be more and shorter stories than in those in the States, and they tend to be filled with lots more pictures. What does that imply? To me it suggests that the English read a lot of stories on a lot of subjects, but they don't require a lot of information. While this may be a generalization, it is important for this discussion, and relevant in terms of computer games. It explains, in part, some of the features of European software in general.

Can You Spell *Plethora*?

There is more energy in the European computer game community than in the U.S. industry. Employees tend to be younger and more enthusiastic about their products than their counterparts over here. There seem to be more titles available per company, and each stand (their term for show booth) tends to be more concentrated in terms of people and product than the equivalent booth at CES.

Why? It appears that the European community wants more games on more subjects, regardless of how engaging the games may be over the long haul. Further, it appears that the European game player wants all the flash and technological sizzle up front. That's why U.S. game players often get the feeling that European games are unfinished. So, as a result, European games tend to be heavy on action sequences (the easiest kind of game play to implement), graphic sizzle (the latest technological gee whiz, regardless of whether it actually fits the game or not), and features upon features (whether they do anything for overall game play or not). With these reservations in mind and my personal bias on the record, here is a Yank's-eye view of ECTS.

Graphic Sizzle

Mirage is a company that has no presence in the U.S., as yet. Since they have a pending distribution deal in the works, I was delighted to take a look at their upcoming SVGA game, *Rise of the Robots.* Anyone who follows Japanimation in the least would get chills just looking at the *3-D Studio* robots they rendered for this game, and this is combined with three-dimensional rooms and tunnels which were constructed by an interior designer. In the game's background story, a robotics construction plant has been taken over by an AI gone awry, and the player's job is to deactivate the evil AI's robots before the whole robotic population can run amok. There is some nice table-based AI in the game, and there are some awesome cinematic sequences leading to the main game play. Alas, the game play is the same horizontal scrolling "beat-'em-up" we've seen a thousand times before. *Rise of the Robots* is for 486s with 4MB only. A VGA version will be available for 386 owners, as well as a 32-color version for Amiga owners.


The European Community offers US companies many Windows of opportunity.

Ocean is a company that is well-known in the U.S. Their latest stateside venture is to bundle a *Jurassic Park* arcade game with **Packard Bell**'s new line of 486-based computers. Graphically, their most impressive product at ECTS was an arcade game called *2000 AD.* The game comes complete with the graphic novel upon which the characters and universe are based. Game play looked typical for a "shooter," but the game features very impressive animation with full-screen figures.

Coktel Vision, the French publisher, unveiled three products at ECTS. Two of the three were graphically intense. *Inca 2*, the sequel to their original action/adventure, promises different-looking cockpits and texture-mapped vessels, more cut scenes, *Return*



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EA draws a rowdy crowd with their latest 'footsy' game.

to Zork style video-overlays with synchronized speech, and four or five new cultures to enrich the scenarios. *Inca 2* feels much more like *Wing Commander* than the original and features many more weapons than the original game.

The other **Coktel Vision** game is *Lost In Time*. Published as two separate games in France, the game will come to the U.S. as one game. Interestingly enough, the game features three completely different graphic looks. In the first part of the game (set in 1840), the female protagonist is trapped on a ship which features 3-D first-person polygon-filled graphics that look vaguely like *Alone in the Dark*. The next phase of the game, however, is presented as taking place in the modern era. All of the graphics are digitized photographs and video clips (inset movies). Finally, there is an island sequence which was drawn by a well-known French cartoonist. The company says they chose those graphics to suggest a dream-like state. To American audiences, this will no doubt seem schizophrenic. To European audiences, this may well serve to provide some of the graphic variety and frenetic pace they seem to like in both their printed and digitized media.

Finally, **Electronic Arts** used the show as an opportunity to show off some of its affiliates' wares (**Three-Sixty Pacific** and **Origin**, in particular), as well as a new data disk for **Bullfrog**'s *Syndicate*, and a work in progress that will present an entirely different look for Bullfrog, essentially moving from the dark future of *Syndicate* to a light, frothy world of sweetness and light.

Action Reaction

Action games still rule the roost in Europe. In addition to those mentioned above with regard to graphics, there are numerous action titles being released. **Electronic Arts** unveiled its entry into the footsy sweepstakes with a large-screen display of its licensed soccer game, and U.S. Gold announced its *Winter Olympics* game. They will definitely publish it world-wide on the Amiga and the Atari ST, but a computer manufacturer may actually bundle the DOS version in the States. **Accolade** used ECTS as an opportunity to unveil their line of sports games, including *Brett Hull Hockey* and *Speed Racer* to the European audience.

In addition, **U.S. Gold** has high hopes for **Imagitek**'s new *Evolution: Lost In Time*, an IBM- and Amiga-based action/puzzler in *The Humans* tradition. Their biggest action hit may well be *Raider*, however. This is a coin-op conversion of a flying game where player-pilots simply shoot everything in sight. Not only was this a popular coin-op in Europe, but the company is hedging its bets by putting an editor in the program so that computer gamers can build their own levels.


The shapes of things to come?

On a more sophisticated level, **Ocean** was touting their upcoming *TFX* as a real flight sim. I was skeptical at first, believing that the company was only interested in doing simple arcade games. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the gamer can choose between three difficulty levels: arcade, realistic and military specification (based on the Eurofighter 2000 specs). The latter even requires an intricate mid-air refueling routine and offers a U.N. Commander campaign game where each successful mission makes the successive one easier, and vice-versa.

Digital Integration, developers of **Spectrum HoloByte**'s *Tornado*, displayed their *Merlin Challenge*, a helicopter landing simulation that was originally programmed as a recruiting tool for the Royal Navy and may end up being a value-added feature on *Tornado CD-ROM*. It's too short to be released as a boxed game, but it is extremely interesting nonetheless. More importantly, however, the company was displaying *Operation Desert Storm*, an add-on war zone for *Tornado* with different graphics to reflect different terrain, architecture and vehicles than those in the original product.

Gametek plans to unveil *Valkyrie* in the U.S. next year, a chopper simulation from Don Hall (*Fokker Triplane*), as well as both an *Air Warrior II* and a new *Air Warrior* for World War I aficionados. Of course, it will come as no great surprise that **Microsoft** was touting their *Flight Simulator 5* and **Activision** was demonstrating its upcoming 1994 release, *MechWarrior II*. Both of these have already been discussed in *CGW* and were receiving an excellent response in Europe.

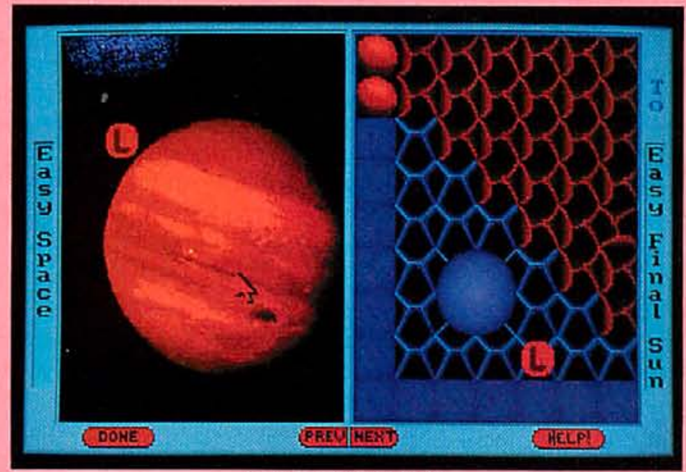
Feature This

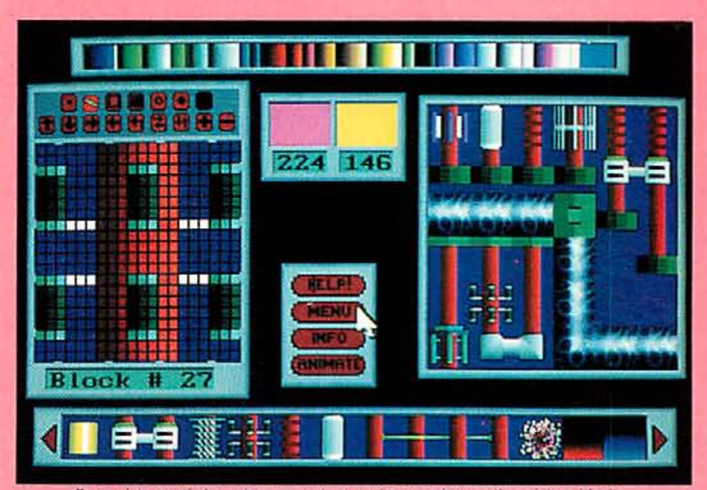
Finally, the most hotly contested field of battle in Europe is expected to be the hybrid space pilot/merchant/pirate/mercenary genre. Not only was **Origin** demonstrating their just-released *Privateer*, but **MicroProse** UK unveiled *Starlord* and **Gametek** displayed *Elite II*. Both the former and latter are primarily arcade games with an economic/role-playing wrapping. *Starlord* is based on Mike Singleton's Play-By-Mail game of the same name. It can be played as a pure strategy game as the player strives to become John Gotti in space, or as an arcade game with a strategy wrapping. It has a host of features that appear to be user-customizable (gender, rank, difficulty, star system, facial appearance, etc.), but we are not positive how much they affect the game play. Appearance wise, it looks like sim graphics in a strategy game.

Are We Cosmo, Yet?

All in all, attending ECTS provided a more cosmopolitan perspective for me. I learned by sight and sound what I had been told by dozens: Europe and the U.S. are *different* markets. I discovered partly why their games tend not to appeal as much to me: European gamers want a short passionate fling with a game, while U.S. gamers tend to want a satisfying long-term relationship. I'm glad we have the cross-pollination, though. I can't help but feel that this industry would be a poorer environment without *Populous*, *Alone in the Dark* and *Lemmings*. CGW

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Over There

Patriarchal Games:

Money, Sex, And Violence With A European Flair

by Robin Matthews

At the recent CES show in Chicago, Guido Henkel, German designer of *Realms of Arkania,* was asked about the apparent lack of good games from German authors. Guido responded by saying that there were some quality games, but that most never make it outside of the country. He also forecast that this was about to change. A couple of weeks later, and almost before you could say "Brandenburg Gate," a plain brown envelope arrived with a brand new game from the Fatherland.

The Patrician from Daze Marketing

The Patrician from **Daze Marketing** is set in 15th century Germany and is a detailed maritime trading game based on the Hanseatic League. This League was a medieval forerunner of the present day Common Market (but without wine lakes, butter mountains, or an Exchange Rate Mechanism), and its activities stretched across Northern Europe. The League was a group of highly organized and forward-looking traders who substantially controlled all international trading in the Middle Ages. In *The Patrician,* you take your place as a member of this social elite, albeit as a lowly merchant. You begin with a single small ship and little money, and must trade your way to a successful and profitable financial empire.

Wealth is only part of the story—social status was all in Medieval Europe. The Mayordom of your town and, ultimately, the position of Alderman of the League are your real goals. In the best European tradition of the time, this involves well-publicized donations, less overt bribes, arranged marriages, and all manner of methodology in the pure and total pursuit of absolute power. This means clashes with the church, despotic kings, decaying kingdoms and a creaking class system. *The Patrician* is not a game for those who are averse to compromising high moral ideals. All is fair in love and computer strategy games; blackmail, greed, corruption are all stock in trade with the occasional clash of force.

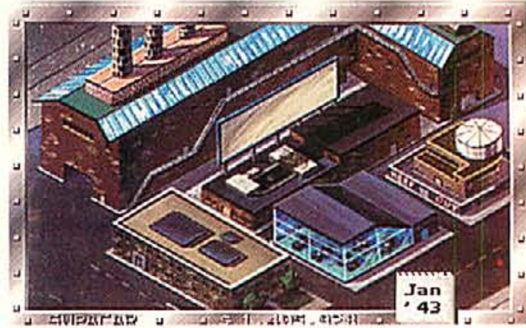
The core of the game is successful trading, and you visit ports all over the medieval world. The gaming interface is straightforward. Unfortunately, every town looks exactly the same and has the same three main locations. The shipyard repairs and builds ships, the town square is the political center, and the waterfront is where business is conducted. In the latter, you can buy and sell cargo, pay the crew, and initiate voyages. These three areas contain shops, inns and provisioners which may be visited on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the shipyard in London looks identical to its counterpart in Novgorod and the Inn looks pretty familiar as well. This sameness is a real hindrance to the atmosphere and pace of the game. In this time period, these ports were teeming, vibrant dynamos of economic and social activity, each with its own character and identity. The generic approach of *The Patrician* could have been fairly easily avoided, but as the design stands it is difficult to become immersed in the setting and in the game as a whole.

As you sail the seven seas, pirate attacks can occur and are resolved using a simplistic arcade-like game. This combat feature looks as if it has been inserted as an afterthought and does little to add to the game.

The trading is on the mundane side and, although the political machinations are initially interesting, they do start to wear thin. The long term appeal of this game, except to bank managers and chartered accountants, is therefore questionable. To put it in the vernacular of the time, thou willst not findst ye a medieval *Civilization* herewith.

Sometimes in this column, European computer leisure software is criticized as being parochial--too British or too French in outlook and approach. *The Patrician* is an interesting game that is challenging *but* could be considered as too Germanic in appearance, perhaps needing a bit of British innovation, some French *savoir faire,* or maybe some Stateside polish. It is nonetheless refreshing to see quality output from Germany, and this is surely a sign of things to come.

Back in blighty, that lot at **Impressions** is at it again; each month this prolific software company seems to release yet another new or upgraded product. Now its ever growing product list is swollen with a raft of new titles: an enhanced version of *Airbucks, Caesar Deluxe,* and newcomers in *Detroit* and *Global Domination. Caesar Deluxe* is a full blown re-write of their well-received Roman strategy game and now boasts detailed on-line help and many other features to improve presentation and smooth out the learning curve.



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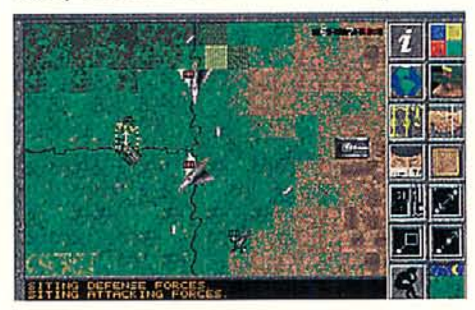


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successfully produce and market your own automotive masterpiece. Starting in 1908 you have until 2008 to invest in research and technology, decide on advertising, open up sales offices, diversify your product range with sports cars, sedans and trucks. *Detroit* should allow competitive play from three human or computer opponents and may support modem play. This sounds like a compulsory purchase for all major auto industry executives and amateur auto-philes.



Impressions' Global Domination

Global Domination is not a home knitting program, but a strategy wargame similar to the boardgame *Risk*. Adopting the simple but appealing approach of that classic game, *Global Domination* can be played at one of two levels. At the easiest level, play is basically "strategic" with large scale units moved by the players, but all combat and calculations being resolved by the computer.

At the second level, the more demanding warlords can decide to be involved at a tactical level. When combat occurs, players can then zoom into the particular battlefields and command their forces in smaller units and in real time. This macro/micro approach is a very much simplified version of the system used by Impressions in *Caesar/Cohort II*, and if correctly implemented could have a wide appeal. Additional features include having to defend key installations and resources, plus possible modem support.

Global Domination will not be limited to just one globe. A random planet generator will provide an infinite number of brave new worlds for conquest, and some of the ready-made ones will allow you to take on the mantle of famous world conquerors from the past. *Global Domination* will have a combination of strong graphics and full sound effects, and should be launching its first strike as you read this.

Speaking of war, even though D-Day was a memorable event, Futura's recently released English version of their *D-Day* game will probably cross the stage of history without a mention. That is, it will pass without mention unless it is held up as a classic example of how *not* to produce a game. *D-Day* is divided into segments, the first of which lets you give orders to your invasion force on a campaign level, and the second leads you into crude simulations of various parts of the subsequent action. The modules are a B-17 bomber, a M-4 Sherman tank, and a paratroop drop simulation, and a stick-men platoon arcade game.

Each of the simulations looks very dated, with the tank one being about the best of the lot. The paradrop module is extremely tacky and should not be shown to anyone who wears, or who knows somebody who wears, a red or green beret. The product as a whole looks as if it wouldn't have been out of place in 1944, and consists of a series of sub-games that are supposed to give a flavor of the complicated multi-service nature of the largest sea-borne invasion. All it really does is leave a pretty bad taste in the mouth. It is definitely one to be avoided if it should happen to make the transatlantic crossing, but with a bit of luck the container ship will be torpedoed by a rogue U-boat in transit.



Futura's D-Day

The above games and any of the other games mentioned in past columns can be obtained from:

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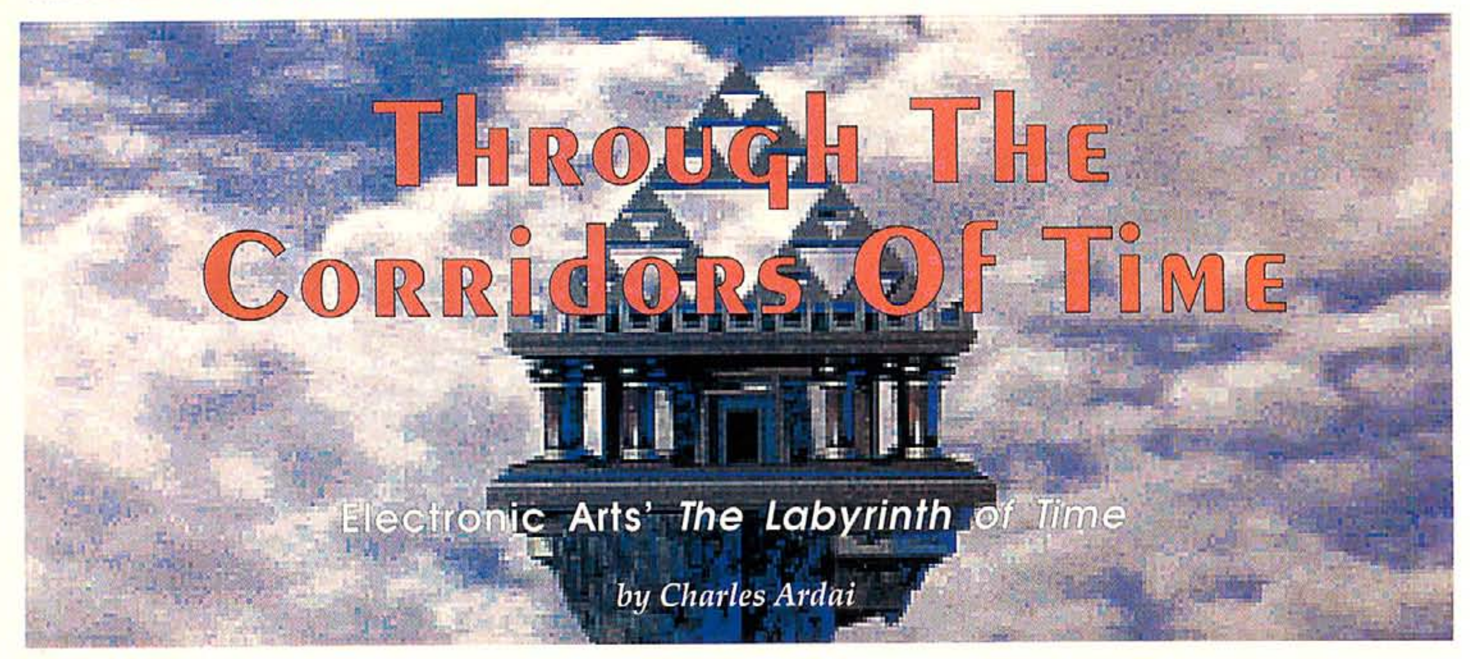
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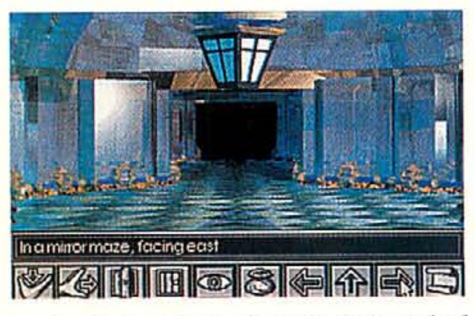
Through The Corridors Of Time

Electronic Arts' *The Labyrinth of Time*

by Charles Ardai

It is probably too much to ask of a game called *The Labyrinth of Time* that it not contain any mazes—tempting, but too much to ask. It may even be asking too much to request that such a game limit itself to a single maze, or even to two. Is it too much to ask, though, that there be something more to an adventure game than a series of mazes, one after another, each distinguished from the next only by the designs on its walls?

By all appearances, **Electronic Arts** feels that the answer is yes, since *The Labyrinth of Time* offers almost nothing but mazes, linked end to end in a complex, irritating chain. Now, I do not doubt that there are players out there who love navigating mazes, though I am not one of them; why else would almost every major adventure game feature a maze sequence? Still, there has to be a limit, and I

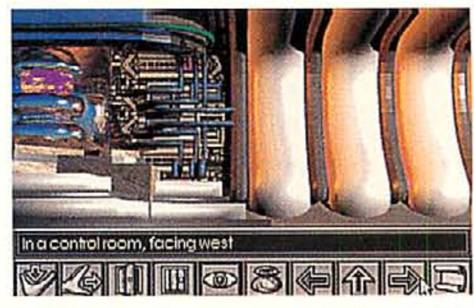


can hardly imagine a player so enamored of mazes that he would not be permanently cured of the taste after slogging through the meandering hallways, corridors, tunnels, rooms, hedgerows and stairwells of this game.

It would not be so bad if *Labyrinth* billed itself openly as a maze game. Instead, the game pretends to be a piece of interactive fiction. It even has an elaborate storyline, some pungent blather about the spirit of King Minos trying to conquer all of time and space by compelling the spirit of Daedalus to construct a supernatural labyrinth that will give him access to all eras of human history. The player is the mortal chosen to destroy the labyrinth and free humanity from Minos' tyranny...

Don't be fooled. There are no characters in the game; the storyline is just an excuse for the designers to sew together a patchwork of visual non sequiturs; the game contains fewer than three dozen portable objects, almost half of which cannot be used for anything; and while there are puzzles, after a fashion, they are a weak bunch, often of the "find the right key to open this door" variety. The game comes on CD-ROM, but there is no speech. There is a point-and-click interface, but it is a sham: most screens contain nothing with which the player can interact, and most objects only function in a single mode. (When you find a book, you can't throw it down the laundry chute, or drop it, or eat it, or put it under the wobbly leg of a table. The only thing you can do is read it.)

There is one thing that the game has in abundance—space. One wanders through room after opulent room, each beautifully color-coordinated and furnished in impeccable taste. The relentlessly stylish visuals feature all sorts of intricate art deco designs, high-contrast lighting, and photographic-quality illustrations. Since the game uses a pivoting first-person perspective, there are four gorgeous views of each gorgeous location. Still, it's all just eye-candy and boring eye-candy at that; no matter how attractive the game gets,



there's no getting away from the fact that it's one empty room after another.

Aside from the matter of boredom, there is also the question of whether the visual opulence makes sense in the context of the storyline. These are tunnels by Gucci, ziggurats by I.M. Pei, Daedalus as history's greatest interior designer. The labyrinth is supposed to intersect every moment in history, so the player is treated to some Victoriana, some 1950s chrome, some 1880s Wild West shtick, some ionic columns, some Mayan relics, some mild futurism, and a hearty dollop of the present day, all stylized to the hilt. The effect is not so much surreal (as it is clearly intended to be) as cluttered, confused and disorienting.

Walking through the game feels like a tour of an abandoned movie studio backlot: here

The Labyrinth Of Time



TITLE:	The Labyrinth Of Time
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM with CD-ROM
REQUIREMENTS:	386-16Mhz or better, 2MB RAM (XMS), VGA graphics, CD-ROM drive; Sound Blaster compatible sound cards, VESA compatible video cards, supported; double speed CD-ROM recommended
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Bradley W. Schenck, Michal Todorovic
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA (415) 571-7171



is where they filmed their Westerns, you can almost hear a tour guide saying; there's the Roman amphitheater, there is the Midwestern diner, and over there, next to the teepee, is our rocketship. It's not eerie or exciting (despite the game's use of an alternately eerie and exciting soundtrack to spice things up). It's just a comely curiosity.

Time and Time Again

One of the things that makes the game particularly frustrating, especially for experienced adventure gamers, is that almost every room contains apparent (as opposed to genuine) objects with which one has no choice but to waste one's time. The difference between an apparent object and a genuine one is that the former doesn't really exist. One can take a closer look at such objects (*Labyrinth* has a close-up shot of just about everything in the game), but one cannot do anything with them. The problem is that it is not obvious to the player which objects are real and which



are not, so one spends an inexcusable amount of time trying to interact with objects that are essentially non-existent.

For example, the CD contains a close-up of every lamp in the game, and it is only after one tries to take, move, open, and close a number of them that one realizes that the lamps are just there as decoration. One room contains two paintings, a bed, and a phonograph, all merely decorative. The mirror maze is crammed full of weird circus props, none of which have a function, but all of which invite the player's scrutiny by offering close-up views when one clicks the "eye" icon on them. One spends hours trying to solve puzzles that do not exist and hours afterward trying to get one's blood pressure down to manageable levels.

Adding to the agony is the *Return To Zork*-ish movement system, which has four separate pictures for each location, one for each primary compass direction. Each 90 degree pivot requires the computer to access the CD, sometimes at a cost of two or three seconds. This may not sound like a long time, but picture waiting two or three seconds every time you want to turn your head to the side and you will appreciate the discomfort of the arrangement.

Since one never knows when the fourth view of a room will contain something that the other three views did not, a diligent player will pivot four times at every location before moving on. Each forward step also requires disk access, so a trip down a long hallway can be an excruciating affair, with the player lurching about like a man on crutches. One craves a fluid first-person movement system as in *Ultima Underworld*, or at least smooth third-person animation as in *Alone In The Dark*. The system of discrete hops, bad



enough in *Return To Zork* (where it wasn't so slow and where each screen contained something to do), here is simply abhorrent.

The final insult is that even after one has successfully explored a region, one isn't done with it since the game requires a good deal of backtracking, sometimes through 50-room mazes and once through three mazes in a row. True, the game offers an automapping feature so that one does not have to trot out the graph paper and pencils, but this is a minor concession. The fact is that even someone who likes mazes will not enjoy going through the same maze, backward and forward, several times.

Time Lines

It is worth mentioning that its physical structure and movement system are not the only areas in which *Labyrinth* fails to shine. Writing is another big problem, both in terms of the game's text and its plot.

As far as text goes, the general lack of things to do leads to any number of "you can't do that" lines, but none of them are as funny as the designers must have thought they were. There are also a number of tepid jokes scattered about; some are pointless bits of silliness (a detective's office labeled "Slade and Barcher," a poster that says "Wanted Fred or Alive"), while most of the rest seem to be in-jokes about, and apparently intended for the amusement of, the designers themselves.

The plotting is similarly misguided. Some strings of puzzles lead nowhere: one has to find a key to open an office, to get a key, to open a jail cell, to get a gun which one never has to use. Other puzzles lead somewhere but not in a very exciting way. In addition to the always delightful act of key collection (brass key, iron key, silver key, gold key, card key)

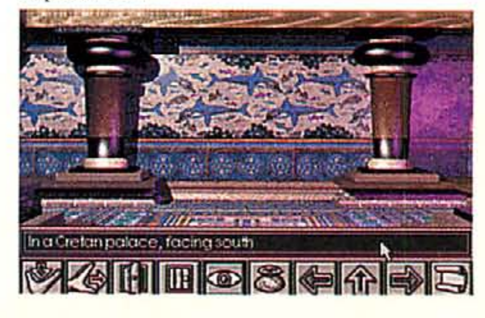


there is a sliding tile puzzle, a lever puzzle or two, and a combination lock to open. In other words, *Labyrinth* contains all the boring "filler" puzzles that enlightened designers gave up years ago.

A final example of bad writing comes right at the start of the game, which has the dreariest, most depressing opening sequence I have ever seen. Until Daedalus shows up, the player's character is practically suicidal.

Is there anything the game does right? Yes. The soundtrack, though a bit over-earnest in its use of Epic Themes, tries very hard to make a silk purse out of the material at hand; the animations and sound effects, though brief and parceled out like a miser's gold, are good when they come. The visuals are often stunning — it would be dishonest to deny that.

Still, a book of art deco posters is equally stunning and much less arduous to get through; a *Tangerine Dream* CD offers similar, and just as good, music; and better puzzles can be had in almost any other game. Frankly, if I were Electronic Arts, I would dismantle *The Labyrinth of Time* and sell it cut-rate for clip art. **CGW**







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Red Crystal	38	-
Return to Zork	47	-
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Shadowgate	-	25
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7th Guest	57	-
12 Rds to Gettusburg	42	42
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Blade	-	57
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Buzz Aldrin Race/Space	57	-
Challenge 5 Realms	Oct	-
Chessmaster 3000	57	-
Chopper Pack	33	-
Conquest of Longbow	42	-
Cyberspace	Oct	-
Dagger of Amon Ra	42	-
Dark Sun	Dec	-
Day of the Tentacle	42	-
Dune	56	-
F-15 III	39	-
Great Naval Battles	49	-
Iron Helix	-	59
It's a Wonderful Life	46	-
Jet Pack	37	-
Kings Quest 5	42	-
Kings Quest 6	47	-
Kings Ransom	37	-
Legend of Kyrandia	42	-
Loom	47	-
Lost Tresurs Infocom 1	47	47
Lost Tresurs Infocom 2	37	37
Mad Dog McCree	35	-
Myst	Dec	-
Prince of Persia	57	-
Privateer	Dec	-
Sherlock Holmes Series		
Consulting Det. #1	47	47
Consulting Det. #2	47	47
Consulting Det. #3	47	47
Star Trek 25th Annivers	47	-
Tony Larussa 2	53	-
Underworld 1/Wing Co 2	47	-
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Ancient Art War Skies	37	-
Archon Ultra	38	-
Bloodstone	26	-
Blue & the Gray	43	-
Caesar	38	-
Cohort 2	19	-
Castles	36	Oct
Northern Camp	19	-
Castles 2	37	Oct
Centurion	16	-
Civilization	38	38
Civilization Master Edit	45	45
Civilization Windows	75	-
Cohort 2	19	-
Command H.Q. Classic	22	-
Conquered Kingdoms	37	-
Add on Disk #1	25	-
Conquest of Japan	38	-
D&D Fantasy Empires	38	-

IBM $37

	IBM	Mac
D&D Stronghold	38	-
Battles of Civil War Series		
Vol.1	26	32
Vol.2	26	32
Vol.3	26	32
Dominion	39	-
Gettysburg	32	-
Gold of Americas	26	30
Great War, The	42	-
Inindo	37	-
Jagged Alliance	Oct	-
L'Emperuer	38	-
Liberty or Death	38	-
Man of War	39	-
Merchant Colony	19	-
No Greater Glory	22	-
Paladin 2	25	-
Pirates! Gold	39	-
Populous 1	16	-
World Editor	15	-
Populous 2	38	-
Powermonger	31	-
Prelude to Jutland	26	-
Railroad Tycoon Classic	22	-
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe	42	-
Rampart	19	-
Red Baron	42	42
Mission Builder	19	-
Seven Cities of Gold	32	-
Sid Meir Civil War	94'	-
Siege & Dogs of War	19	-
Spoils of War	37	-
Uncharted Waters	43	43
Vikings Fields Conquest	37	-
Warlords	-	37
Warlords 2	42	-

World War II

	IBM	Mac
Aces of the Pacific	47	-
WWII:1946	25	-
Aces Over Europe	42	-
Campaign Dsk #1	Oct	-
B-17 Flying Fortress	38	-
Battle of South Pacific	37	-
Battletank Barbarossa	39	-
Carriers at War	42	42
Construction Kit	37	37
Carrier Strike	42	-
Expansion Dsk #1	21	-
Clash of Steel	43	-
Fleet Commander	Oct	-
Fleet Med	49	-
Grand Fleet	39	-
Great Naval Battles	42	-
Super Ships/Atlantic	19	-
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DO-335	20	-
HE-162	20	-
P-38	10	-
P-80	30	-
Silent Service 2 Classic	22	-
Task Force 1942	35	-
V for Victory Series		
Gold, Juno, Sword	39	39
Kasserine Pass	Dec	Dec
Market Garden	43	43
Stalingrad	Dec	Dec
Utah Beach	43	43
Velikiye Luki	43	43
Victory Pack	44	44
Victory at Sea	43	43
Western Front	22	-
WWII:Battles of Pacific		-



Modern

	IBM	Mac
A-10 Warthog	94'	-
A Line in the Sand	19	-

IBM $45

	IBM	Mac
Buzz Aldrns Race/Sace	42	-
Commnche:Max Ovrkll	43	-
Expansion Dsk. #1	25	-
Expansion Dsk. #2	25	-
Conflict Korea	19	-
Conflict Middle East	19	-
Crisis in the Kremlin	19	-
Empire Deluxe	38	-
Scenario Disk	20	-
Empire Deluxe (WIN)	38	-
F-117A Nighthawk	28	-
F-14 Fleet Defender	Dec	-
F-15 2 Classic	22	-
F-15 III	38	-
Voice Commander	18	-
Falcon 3.0	45	-
Mig-29	33	-
Op. Fighting Tiger	25	-
Falcon MC	-	42
Flight Sim 5.0	45	-
Grandest Admiral	Dec	-
Gunship 2000	28	-
Campaign Disk #1	22	-
Halls of Montezuma	26	29
Harpoon	26	39
Battleset 2 or 3	19	-
Battleset 4	23	26
Harpoon Dsgnr Sries	16	32
Harpoon Dsgnr Sries 2	26	26
Harpoon Signature Edit	49	49
Harpoon 2	49	Oct
Harrier Assault	37	-
Jet Fighter 2	42	-
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M1 Tank Platoon	29	-
MacArthur's War	32	-
Patriot	25	-
Perfect General	37	-
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Red Storm Rsng Classic	22	-
Seal Team	38	-

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Sci-Fi

	IBM	Mac
Armour Geddon	32	-
Armored Fists	38	-

Victory at Sea

Designed by Jim Dunnigan, Victory at Sea will be the pre miere grand strategy Pacific Theater game on the market due to it's game depth and ease of play.

	IBM	Mac
Battle Chess 4K (VGA)	32	-
Battle Chess 4K (SVGA)	37	-
Battle Cruiser 2400 A.D	TBA	-
Bld.Mankind Fut.Space	Dec	-
Cyber Empires	32	-
Global Effect	19	-
Global Conquest	19	-
Lunar Command	Oct	-
Maelstrom	42	-
Mantis	41	-
Speech Pack	19	-
Masters of Orion	39	-
Mechamander	Oct	-
Mechwarrior 2	Dec	-
Meglomania	19	-
Mercenaries	37	-
Mercenaries 2	Dec	-
Pax Imperia	Oct	43
Privateer	49	-
Speech Pack	17	-
Reach for the Stars	26	28
Rules of Engagement 2	38	-
Spaceward HO!(WIN)	37	-
Spaceward HO!(DOS)	37	-
Spectre	37	-
Star Control 2	37	-
		Star



	IBM	Mac
Legions 2	38	-
Strike Commander	49	-
Speech Pack	19	-
Tactical Disk #1	20	-
Strike Squad	38	-
When Two World's War	38	-
Wing Commander 1	19	-
Secr.Mssn 1 & 2	19	-
Wing Commander 1 Dlx	49	-
Wing Commander 2	49	-
Spec.Ops.Disk 1 & 2	19ea	-
Speech Pack	13	
Wing Commander Acad	33	-
X-Wing	42	-
Add on Disk	20	-
B-Wing	19	-

General

	IBM	Mac
A-Train	42	42
Const. Set	24	24
Air Bucks	37	-
Battles of Destiny	37	-
Battlechess	22	32
Battlechess (Windows)	32	-
Battlechess 4000 VGA	32	-
Battlechess 4000 SVGA	37	-
Buzz Aldrin Race Space	42	-
Civilization	38	38
Civilization Windows	42	42
Civilization MPE	45	45
Command HQ Classic	22	-
Design Your Own R.R.	38	-
El-Fish	37	-
Empire Deluxe	38	-
Flight Sim 5.0	Dec	-
Global Conquest	39	-
Gobliiins	37	-
Grand Slam Bridge 2	34	-
Grandest Admiral	Dec	-
Hong Kong Majong Pro	32	-



	IBM	Mac
Incredible Machine	32	-
Incredible Machine 2	32	-
Lemmings 2	37	-
Lost Admiral	38	Sep
Lost Admiral Enhanced	Dec	-

Paladin II

The long awaited sequel is no dis counted for the holi days! As an appren tice in the Order of Paladin you must earn the title of Paladin by undertak ing perilous quests.

	IBM	Mac
Perfect General	38	-
WWII Disk	22	-
Great Batt.20th Cen	25	-
Perfect General Enhanc	Dec	-
R.R. Tycoon Classic	22	-
R.R. Tycoon Deluxe	38	-
SIMCity Supreme	-	37
SIMCity Supreme 2	-	47
SIMCity 2000	Dec	-
SIMEarth	42	42
SIMEarth (Windows)	42	-
SIMFarm	32	42
SIMLife	42	42
SIMLife (Windows)	47	-
Socrates V 3.0 Chess	Dec	-
Solitaires Journey	38	-

Sports

	IBM	Mac
4-D Boxing	16	31
APBA Basball/WIN	44	-
ATP Tennis	31	-
All Amer Coll Ftbll 92'	37	-
Andretti's Race Chall	16	-
Bill Ellliot Nascar	32	32
Car and Driver	37	-
Front Page Football Pro	48	-
Grand Prix	37	22
Hardball 3	37	-
MLBPA Players Disk	15	-
Stadium Disk	18	-
Hockey League Sim2	29	-
John Madden Football 2	31	-
Jordan in Flight	38	-
Links 386 Pro	42	-
Banff Springs	19	-
Belfry	19	-
Innisbruck	19	-
Mauna Kea	19	-
Pinehurst	19	-
Microleague Baseball 4	33	-

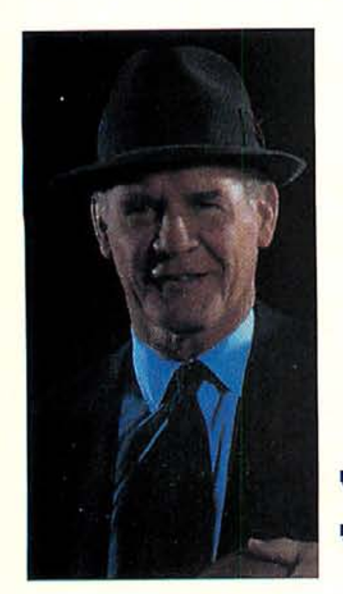
Pax Imperia

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	IBM	Mac
NCAA Road to Fnal 4	38	-
NFL Challenge	56	-
NFL Coaches Football	33	-
NFL Video Pro Football	47	-
Pro League Baseball	37	-
Stratomatic Baseball	42	-
Tony Larussa Basball 2	37	-
92' Stats Disk	12	-
AL/NL Stadium's	18	-
Fantasy Draft	12	-
Wayne Gretzky 3	37	-
Hockey Lega Sim	28	-
Wilson Pro Golf	27	-
World Circuit	33	-

Keyboard Overlays

A-10 Tank Killer	10
Aces of the Pacific	10
B-17 Flying Fortress	10
Chuck Yeager Flight	10
Commanche:Max Ovrkl	10
F-15 Strike Eagle 3	10
F-117A Nighthawk	10
Falcon 3.0/3.01	10
Falcon 3.0 Pro	19
Flight Simulator 4.0	10
Gunship 2000	10
Secret Weapons Luftwaf	10
X-Wing	10



AN EXTRA LOAD OF LANDRY

Merit Software Updates *Tom Landry's Strategy Football*

by Jim Gindin

When Tom Landry coached the Dallas Cowboys, he was known as a master strategist. He stood calmly on the sidelines during games, dressed like a professional on his way to the office. He never called attention to himself, and he humbly passed on the credit for his success to his Maker.

While he was doing this, of course, he simply coached the jocks off countless opponents. He constantly devised new defenses to confound the complex offenses of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, and he tailored his offenses to make the most of the specific skills of the men who played for him. When fans think about strategy football, they think about Tom Landry.

And that's clearly what **Merit Software** had in mind when they hired Landry to help put together *Tom Landry's Strategy Football*, and their latest release, *TLSF Deluxe Edition*. Unfortunately, Merit Software ran into the same problem all artificial intelligence programmers meet: it is impossible to shrink wrap the human brain. It is impossible to take Tom Landry and his football vision and package them off to the nearest software store—at least not in the 3.1 megabytes of hard disk space *TLSF Deluxe* requires.

TLSF Deluxe was designed to meet a specific need within the football simulation genre: teaching the strategy of football. Plenty of games allow users to design playbooks, and many of these same games explain the ins and outs of defensive formations and allow fancy pass patterns, but *TLSF Deluxe* provides the next step. Before any offensive or defensive



play, the gamer can click the "Landry" button. This generates a screen full of information amounting to Landry's assessment of the game situation, the expectations of the opponent, and a recommended plan of action. "Landry" will even suggest a play.

Using this interface, players learn more about game specifics. A football fan can understand the dilemma inherent in coaching against a team with an excellent running back. Should he constantly key the defense to follow that back and risk having the defense shredded by the passing game? Or should he let the runner get his hundred-yard output and try to keep the offense from scoring on big plays?

Like Landry himself, the game is not flashy. It comes with one high-density disk (3.5" version) and a well-written 50-page manual. It's so elegant that installation takes only about one minute on a 486-based machine. *TLSF* includes on-line "documentation" (an encyclopedia of terms used in the game that turns out to be invaluable) and uses a simple mouse-driven basic interface with windows and click boxes, mostly in the gray, white and blue Cowboy colors. While there isn't a lot of complexity in the package, it's refreshing to see a game which does not contain major programming bugs.

The Deluxe version is the same engine that drove the first version. League play was added, as was the ability to edit player ratings and print rosters and other information. Some new formations and pass patterns were added.

Exes and Ohs

This is not an action game, so most of the product is centered around football strategy. Rather than providing a playbook, *TLSF* offers a set of formations and options. A typical play might involve selecting the "power-I" formation, "right side" as the "strong" side of the formation, "inside run," "counter left" as the running play and "halfback" as the ball carrier. With these options, thousands of plays are available, though only a subset make a lot of sense.

Defense is provided in a similar manner, with would-be coaches choosing from several formations, three types of pass coverage, and available options for individual blitzing, keying on runners, or double-teaming receivers.

Once offensive and defensive setups are chosen, *TLSF* simulates the play. There is a graphics option available, which shows the result of the play, but impatient gamers are likely to turn it off by the end of the first quarter of their first game. The graphics are reminiscent of the early action football games, with the result of the play often having little to do with what is depicted on the screen. Ball carriers run through defenders as

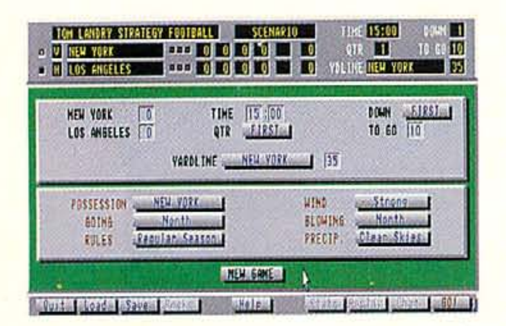
Tom Landry's Strategy Football



TITLE:	Tom Landry's Strategy Football Deluxe Edition
PRICE:	$49.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286-12 Mhz or better (386 recommended), 1MB RAM, VGA graphics, 3.1MB hard disc space, mouse.
# OF PLAYERS:	1 or 2, (modem to modem option)
PROTECTION:	Documentation look-up
DESIGNER:	Kerry Batts
PUBLISHER:	Merit Software Dallas, TX (800) 238-4277

if they weren't there and passes disappear into crowds of coverage without resolution. In some cases, nine defenders surround a receiver 30 yards downfield on a long pass play, five defenders standing in line like some helmeted version of the Rockettes.

TLSF provides the now-standard VCR interface so users can replay, frame-by-frame, the graphic equivalent of the play. It's kind of like standing too close to an Impressionist painting at the National Gallery: the more detail you see, the less you understand. Still, aside from the graphical limitations, *TLSF*

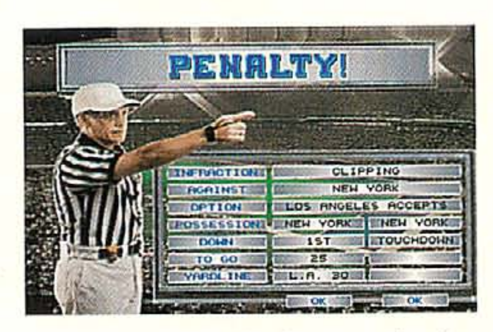


does provide a realistic outcome for individual plays. Runs against run defenses don't gain a lot of yardage. Completion percentages decline against pass defenses.

As a tutorial, *TLSF* stops with the outcome of the play. There is no "Landry post-mortem" button to provide an explanation of what went right or wrong with the play. That would be a welcome addition, providing the user with additional insight into how football is played, but even Landry's advice *before* the play isn't terribly complete. There are only a few advice screens available when the human coach is doing well and there's no mention of the individual strengths of any player.

The game is strongest on single-play simulation, providing a scenario editor complete with weather options so users can try, for instance, repeated attempts to convert a third-and-seven against a pass defense while behind three points on a windy, snowy day late in the fourth quarter. The game as a whole, however, is not as strong.

In the manual, the writers claim that the game keeps track of user play selection. Unfortunately, this only means that the program will use the data to determine the percentage of plays in which it will use a "run" defense versus a "pass" defense. Even with the "player fatigue" option turned on, it was possible to run the same running back on the same counter play with the same formation on every single offensive play in the game. One game featured a strong halfback running 87 times for more than 460 yards and eight touchdowns. Sure, by the fourth quarter the



defense was guessing "run" on most plays, but the counter play kept getting its four yards.

The same held true for the passing game. One receiver caught more than 560 yards' worth of long passes in one game. Another made 66 short receptions in another game. Every single pass is thrown to the primary receiver, except for long passes when a "hot receiver" is allowed. Yet, this secondary receiver is rarely the quarterback's target. No matter how many times the same play is run, the computer "Landry" only provides a vague warning about mixing up play selection and using different receivers.

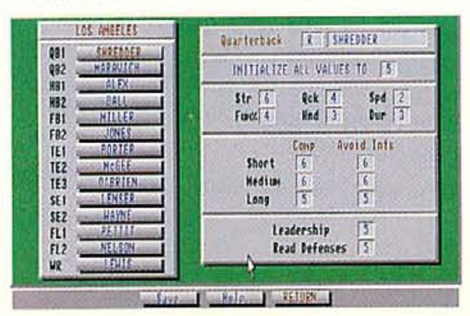
A League Option Of Its Own

League play is possible with *TLSF*. The game comes with a good scheduling algorithm, and is designed for single-season replay. Computer versus computer game play allows simulation of an entire week's worth of games in about two minutes on a 486-based machine. The game even understands the NFL's complex formulae for determining playoff entry.

When left on its own, results are fairly realistic, with individual season totals a little high due to the fact that injuries and fatigue are rare. Alas, the game only tracks a few statistics, with no mention at all of defensive players, so statistics buffs will be disappointed.

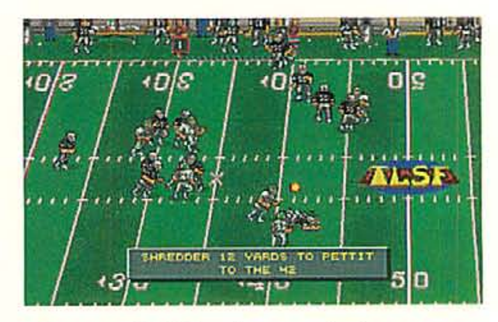
The computer's AI provides balanced, uninspired play selection. A knowledgeable human coach should garner more wins than losses against the AI. For the most part, the AI will stay within the realm of accepted football strategy and won't recognize many unusual situations.

TLSF Deluxe comes with 1992 teams. Since



Merit Software did not get permission to use NFL team names, logos or player names, the teams only mirror the NFL in terms of cities, divisions and approximate strengths. True to form, Dallas is nearly unbeatable. Individual players are ranked from one to nine in several categories. Dallas, for instance, has players with nine ratings in most categories. New England, the worst team in the league last year, has a lot of "fours" in many key individual categories. The ratings make a difference, but it is possible to field a team of "ones" in every category on defense and still win an occasional game. So the difference between a "six" and an "eight" is very, very small.

TLSF allows users to edit team and player ratings and create leagues with a variety of structures. (Just remember to use the return key when saving lineups or any customized changes will mysteriously disappear.) Only 32 players are provided with each team, including four special teams return men. No individual linemen exist on either offense or defense, which greatly limits the variety and enjoyment of putting together a good running attack.



Because *TLSF* can't use real player names, the programmers made up their own. Many names are based on real players. "R. Peety" and "B. Where" quarterback for Detroit, where Rodney Peete and Andre Ware share duties in real life. Philadelphia features "Travolta," "Stallone" and "Hoffman" on defense. In a form of political commentary rare in the sports game industry, "B. Clinton" and "A. Gore" quarterback the pitiful New England squad.

The Post-Game Rap

In the on-line documentation, Merit's programmers write, "No game could ever be big enough to encompass all of his [Landry's] knowledge." That's certainly true, but if they had managed to digitized even half of his persona, this game could have had some of the feel of coaching in the NFL. As it is, *TLSF's* use of Tom Landry's picture on the box is a lot like Hallmark marketing itself with the image of William Shakespeare. **CGW**



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Electronic Arts' *Kasparov's Gambit*

by Bryan Walker

No other game in recorded history has attained the global appeal and enduring elegance of chess. Unfortunately, the electronic glitter of today's gaming venues has made the engrossing subtlety of chess easy to lose sight of. Luckily for chess fans of all skill levels, **Heuristic Software** has teamed with the energetic and charismatic FIDE World Champion chess player, Garry Kasparov, to produce the next step in PC chess games: *Kasparov's Gambit (Gambit)*.

Garry Kasparov has been aware that a void has existed in the computer chess industry for some time. The "artificial intelligence" of chess programs has been getting stronger, but little has been done to help the human intelligence on the other side of the board become a stronger player. It's a sure bet that most readers have already had a chess program thrash them repeatedly. For the accomplished player, this level of challenge is fine. However, those trying to learn and enjoy the game can be frustrated by a chess program whose primary concern is victory alone, with no real emphasis on teaching better chess. Opposing this philosophy, *Gambit's* ambitious goal is to challenge a Master chess player, while dramatically improving the casual gamer's play with powerful coaching features.

The installation of *Gambit* is simple and straightforward, with the \GAMBIT directory taking up a maximum of 11MB of hard drive space. The only difficulty I encountered during installation was configuring *Gambit's* sound drivers to suit my Pro Audio Spectrum 16. However, experience with the PAS16 leads me to believe that *Gambit* was being victimized by a stubborn sound card, instead of vice versa. New gamers will find the manuals clear and concise, explaining installation, possible technical problems, and the game's numerous features well. A brief explanation of the rules of chess is provided, in addition to an enlightening history of the game itself. The story of Garry Kasparov's rapid rise to the World Championship, and the suspicious maneuvers that sought to block it, certainly make interesting reading.

Book Openings

With computer chess being played on home systems for some 15 years, truly original features are becoming scarcer than hen's teeth. Due to this, owners of previous titles such as *Chessmaster 3000* will find a number of familiar features in *Gambit*. Even though it's a DOS-based program, *Gambit* has an attractive window-based graphic interface that allows individual windows to be sized and moved about the screen. Much like a true Windows application, the player has a great deal of flexibility in designing his own "environment." Moving pieces and selecting options is also a simple point-and-click affair. The VCR-style control panel allows the player to scroll through a game's move list, pause a game in progress, ask for hints, or force the computer opponent to move immediately. Like some earlier titles, *Gambit* also has tutorials, famous games, and various playing boards to select from. The 121 clear and logical tutorials cover the full range of chess fundamentals for the beginning player, and can be sorted and viewed by Color, Theme or Opening criteria. Along with the on-line Help and Glossary functions, the Tutorials are an excellent way to start from square one.

Hypermodern Opening

Gambit certainly qualifies as a multimedia chess game. Using digitized video clips of Kasparov, the World Champion can provide the player with real-time coaching during a game. Execute a bad move and Kasparov shakes his head saying, "I don't think you're on the right track, now..." An eccentric move causes the puzzled Kasparov to remark "I had not considered this move!" While a number of different clips are present, they began to grate within a day or two and were turned off accordingly. For players in a pinch for hard-



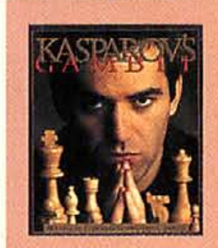
drive space, the 3MB video subdirectory can be deleted with no effect on the game, provided the Video option is turned off in the Coaching Setup panel. Some gamers will likely follow my lead and deactivate the video option, but this feature could be just the ticket to keep a youngster's attention.

While on the subject of player attention, few are going to be able to resist the SVGA graphics mode *Gambit* offers. The 3-D playing boards are absolutely stunning in SVGA, with the pieces sliding and scaling with incredible smoothness. Each of the three different 3-D sets are great show-off items when visitors ask to see what a PC can really do.

J' Adoube

While other chess programs also have the ability to customize computer opponents, *Gambit* offers a unique and effective approach. The Aggressiveness, Creativity, Attentiveness, Orthodoxy and Strength of each computer opponent can be modified using a simple graphic sliding scale. In addition, the opponent's Opening Prefer-

Kasparov's Gambit



TITLE:	Kasparov's Gambit
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386SX-16MHz, 2 MB RAM (EMS), VGA graphics, 11 meg bytes of hard disk space, DOS 5.0 or higher; Adlib, SoundBlaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland sound cards supported. (486DX, mouse, 512K SVGA card recommended.)
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Julio Kaplan, Ralph Nagel, with Garry Kasparov
PUBLISHER:	Electronic Arts San Mateo, CA (415) 571-7171

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Your Father, the last king of Alonia, failed his quest to liberate the realm from inhuman tyrants. Now it's your turn. As Tris, the last heir to the throne, it's your destiny to match sword and sorcery against the foul Ruzakian Hord. Seek incredible magicks to augment your power as you delve into the conquered city of Hedburg. A virtual 3-D fantasy world awaits your next command - Explore the dangers of the Old City, pit your awesome might against horrible creatures in a dark dungeon. Fight well and you may free the kingdom. Discover the Forgotten Castle and you may learn of your father's fate...

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TWIN DOLPHIN GAMES, INC.

ence can be changed from Tournament/Best, Classical, Hypermodern, Aggressive or the beginner's Starter Book lines with a click of the mouse. Choosing the "Player Preference" option allows the computer opponent to choose the opening strategy suited to its chosen playing-strength values.



Another new feature lies in the animated Analysis Board option. Using this, the player can peek into the problem-solving processes of the game, observing the moves and combinations as they're played out in rapid "what if" fashion. The text portion of this feature displays a number of variables, including the astonishing number of positions per second the computer is calculating.

A very significant new feature *Gambit* brings to the board is the ability to rate the gamer's play using the Elo system. When activated, this feature makes note of the player's strengths and weaknesses, and provides a rating between 800 and 2800. While the ratings seemed to be inflated by 200-400 points, this feature is still very useful to players of all skill levels, becoming increasingly more accurate after 40-50 games have been played. In addition, the game presents a brief text description of the player's tendencies, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the computer opponents.

Put Me In, Coach!

Without question, many players are going to find *Gambit's* greatest strengths lie in the Coaching, Hint, Quiz and Famous Game features. The Coaching option provides tactical tips, insights, suggestions and warnings during play, pointing out contingencies that the player may not have considered. The Hint option is a three-stage function that provides increased assistance for a position



each time it's called upon. The first hint will be very general, such as "Move your Knight." The second hint might say "Move your Knight at F3." The third Hint will make the move automatically, allowing the player to see what the program thinks is the best choice. In replaying the huge library of 500 Famous Games, Kasparov's anecdotes and analysis will help players understand the unique flavor of each game. The enlightening commentary on the Famous Games alone is worth the price of admission, as it presents Kasparov's views and alternate strategies in thought-provoking style. Like the Tutorials, the Famous Games can be sorted by Color, Theme or Opening, helping the player follow a particular learning point through several games. Many of the important terms and concepts in Kasparov's comments are highlighted in green, indicating that the player need only click on that word for a full definition from the Help/Glossary feature. The Quiz option is another entertaining and educational feature which can pounce upon an unwary player while viewing a Famous Game. *Gambit* might suddenly ask the player to find the best move at the game's critical juncture, patiently prompting until the correct choice is made. It's a bit of a thrill to suddenly be thrust into the middle of a historic game, with the World Champion asking what to do next!

Carnivorous Kasparov

For the one percent of players who can actually beat a modern chess program on equal terms, *Gambit* is more than willing to take the kid gloves off. In fact, the "Socrates II" engine at the heart of *Gambit* won the 1993 International Chess Championship of the Association of Computing Machinery. Incredibly, *Gambit's* engine took on the supercomputer-powered "Cray Blitz" program and fought to a draw! With such established performance, I wasn't surprised to find *Gambit* soundly defeating the other chess programs I tested it against in informal competition. With the "Kasparov" computer opponent playing in the full-bore "Serious" mode, the program can play at an Elo rating of around 2400. I found the Aggressive and Hypermodern opening books playing such ruthless lines in "Serious" mode that I began to wonder if *Gambit* might need to be fed a digital watch every few days.

Poisoned Pawns

Being a DOS-based program trying to emulate a Windows-type environment, *Gambit's* interface can be a tad awkward. The mouse response wasn't particularly crisp, with the movement and sizing of the different option windows quite cumbersome, at times. Saving a game preserves only the move list, leaving the player to manually reselect the opponent, and tediously scroll through the moves to restart the game at the next session. The Coach is also prone to "crying wolf," suddenly claiming that a perfectly safe piece



is in danger. Usually, the program retracts these mysterious outbursts within a few seconds, but they can still be disruptive. The Coach has also taken a cue from the Department of Redundancy Department, occasionally giving hints and tips two or even three times in rapid succession.

In the bug-infested world of PC games, I uncovered only one glitch in the game that affected play. While chasing down the opposing king during an endgame, *Gambit* simply refused to move in the allotted time, but the game did not crash. Discussions with National Master Hal Bogner of Electronic Arts



revealed that this glitch was thought to have been ironed out during development. His opinion was that the program knew that defeat was inevitable, and was getting conflicting flags on how to move. I figured that, like "Joshua" in the movie *Wargames*, the program may have discovered the only way to win was not to play...

En Passant

While there's only so much that can be done with a game older than most nations, *Kasparov's Gambit* deserves a serious look from any gamer interested in learning chess, or learning to play better chess. The superior coaching features, huge game library, beautiful SVGA graphics, and powerful engine place it above any PC game on the market. It's now the only chess game on my system, and I can't seem to find my watch... **CGW**

TWO REASONS WHY FLIGHT SIMULATORS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME...

Letters From Paradise











Frying Our Canadian Bacon

The article, "Atlantic Breakout," by H.E. Dille, shows your magazine has sacrificed editorial integrity for vindictive irresponsible journalism. You took a "real world" event, convoy ON 115, and surrounded it with a completely fabricated scenario (by your magazine's own admission) that claims the Canadian navy is responsible for a cataclysmic maritime disaster which, in reality, never took place. Moreover, the article states that because "the Canadians had botched it," the American naval services had to step in and assume Canadian escort duties in the North Atlantic. Such an implication is utter malicious nonsense.

The truth is: during World War Two, the USN, superior to the Canadian navy in virtually every capacity, performed with such mediocrity in the North Atlantic as to exasperate the Royal Navy. At the end of 1942, A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, recommended to Prime Minister Winston Churchill that all Canadian *and* American escorts be removed from the North Atlantic for training because of gross inadequacies in both navies' conduct of anti-submarine warfare.

Example: protection of convoy ONS 92 by an American-led Mid-Ocean Escort Force (MOEF) was such a failure, Commander J.B. Heffernan, USN the Senior Officer Escort, was removed from command. Later, in 1943, that same MOEF group lost 27 ships in back-to-back convoys, in exchange for only one U-boat sunk. Compare that to ON 115 (the real one). Two ships were sunk and another damaged under Canadian escort, but the Germans lost U-558 while two others suffered such a hammering they sailed straight back to port for repairs.

Without question, general USN and US Coast Guard performance in WW2 was outstanding, and the Canadian navy was woefully lacking in many areas, but in North Atlantic escort duties they achieved the same degree of success. Each had its victories and its disasters. More pointedly, the escort sailors of both countries—often working together—fought with unbridled tenacity and tireless valour against a superior foe who sometimes outnumbered the escorts by as much as four to one.

Your article is a spiteful insult to these sailors. As for the Canadian navy, the article is a stupid, unprovoked, unjustified misrepresentation of facts. How would your American readers feel if a Canadian magazine published a scenario such as "because the USN was incompetent, the Royal Canadian Navy had to step in and save American ass at Guadalcanal"? Your article is inexcusable.

R.D. Newman, Captain, Canadian Forces
Hornell Heights, Ontario, CANADA

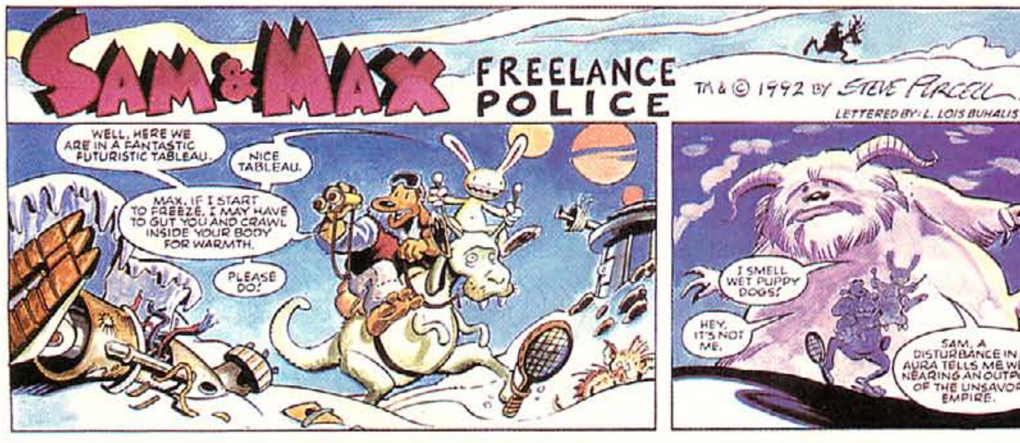
H.E. Dille responds:

Captain Newman, I believe the umbrage you have taken with the article in question is a reflection of several separate elements being taken out of context with the theme of the complete work. "Atlantic Breakout" reviewed three expansion sets for SSI's Great Naval Battles: North Atlantic *product line. The overall goal of these products was to allow users to explore alternative history. In fiction, as well as gaming, the alteration of historical events to illustrate a theme or explore alternative developments is a widespread practice.*

As the major theme of two of the add-on sets involved expanded American presence in the North Atlantic Conflict, the inclusion of some fictional background to justify the diversion of USN assets away from the Pacific Theater of Operations was appropriate. Raymond Spruance was a natural choice as the center piece of the fiction, as Admiral Ernest King's desire to have him in the Atlantic was well documented, but the motivation for his presence still required explanation. ON 115 retains the historical significance of being one of the first concerted U-boat efforts of the campaign, wherein eight to nine members of the wolf pack converged and harassed the convoy for five days straight. I concur with your assessment of the Canadian's actual performance during this engagement, which reflected professional screening and counterattacking, but the actual engagement did not contain surface actions against the Kriegsmarine, either.

Numerous historians have contended that, if Hitler had used his surface raiders in conjunction with U-boat actions, the entire complexion of the Atlantic conflict would have changed. With this firmly in mind, it seemed logical and justified, within the context of historical fiction, to alter the events of ON 115 to introduce Scharnhorst and Tirpitz to the tactical hypothesis, much as the programs under review do. Such an appearance might have resulted in the debacle alluded to in the fictional introduction, as none of the escort ships in service at that time, either Canadian or USN, had equivalent firepower.

Finally, the comment which seems to have generated your greatest consternation, "...the Canadians had botched it," is nothing more than a speculative appraisal of what a Raymond Spruance might have thought, bitterly, if Admiral King had been successful in snatching him away from the command that he truly desired in the Pacific. Again, the practice of stepping inside the minds of characters in a work of fiction is also widely accepted, and is not a reflection of my personal beliefs, nor those of my publisher. As a brother Naval Officer of fifteen years experience, operating in conjunction with many different NATO Navies, including the Canadians, I admire the professionalism I have had the benefit of witnessing. I regret any misconceptions that may have been generated by the blend of fact and fiction which was purposefully con-

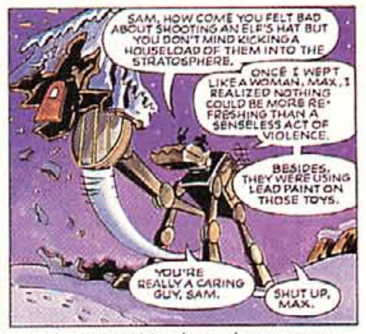












For those who haven't had the pleasure of meeting Steve Purcell's pals, Sam & Max, CGW is pleased to present a series of their cartoons, originally appearing in LucasArt's in-house magazine, The Adventurer. Sam & Max will soon be starring in a feature-length game, Sam & Max Hit The Road, scheduled for a holiday season release.

structed for this work and hope that my response to your inquiry alleviates your concerns.

Modem Times

I am looking into the possibility of actually using my fax/modem I bought a year ago, but know little about the various services (i.e. CompuServe, GEnie, etc.). I would appreciate some information as to what exactly they can do (besides tell me the weather) and name some which you recommend most highly for both general use and price.

Your August article, "The Great Underground Empire," has piqued my interest in the world of multi-player role-playing. However, Mr. Brassil left out one important factor: price. Two questions: first, what would a well-seasoned veteran in the world of role-playing games expect to pay on the average, per day (hour, year, ...), and secondly, in general, which one(s) do you recommend most highly, including the price factor.

Two more things. One, when you put *Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space* from **Interplay** on your Top 100 list, put down an "A" for me. It is one of the most entertaining, yet educational, games I've played in a long time and I await the CD-ROM version (if and when I get a CD-ROM drive, that is). Two, in your free Reader Inquiry Service card, which letter do you circle if you have no children?

Brian Czaja
Massapequa Park, NY

In CGW #106, (May, 1993), we provided a listing of all the games of which we were aware on commercial telecommunications networks. That issue of the magazine may still be purchased as a back issue and would be the best source of that information until the September 1994 issue (#122), when we will once again feature a special section on games via telecommunications networks. The May coverage listed prices for all of the games, but the Multi-Player Games Network *has reduced its pricing since that issue went to press. As for the price, it depends on time played. Some gamers spend more than $100 per month; some keep their charges below $20.*

The question with regard to children is a way of monitoring our readers' needs with regard to coverage of children's software. If you have no children, you have no need to circle any letter in that area.

Exercising The Damon

As an avid WWII historian, I bought my personal computer in anticipation of *Aces Over Europe.* What's taking so long? I thought they had the basic engine laid out from the excellent *Aces of the Pacific* simulation. Isn't it just a matter of changing a few shapes and markings on the planes and PRESTO?

Matt Zimmerman
San Francisco, CA

Yes. Yes it is. It's hand painting each box that is taking the time.

Seriously, some of the code was reused, but there is new AI to reflect the different tactics used in Europe, and all the new data and art were input. Since the planes have significantly more detail than those in Pacific, the frame rate runs about the same as the earlier game unless the gamer reduces the detail level to that of Pacific. In the latter case, it runs faster than the earlier game. As of press time, the final bug hunt was on, and the game was expected to be complete by the time this issue hit the stands.

stands.

Id Infinitum

Do you have any new information on **Apogee/Id** 3-D games?

Brandon Lackey
Bakersfield, CA

***Id Software** became so caught up in the production of the Super Nintendo version of* Wolfenstein 3-D *(where the dogs have become rats and the Gestapo have become almost extraterrestrial aliens) that the ship date for* Doom *has been rescheduled for early December of this year.*

A Ziff In Time

Congratulations on your team-up with Ziff-Davis—I think. Was this a hostile takeover? I hope the new boss will not change the friendly and irreverent nature of *CGW*. I also hope the bean counters don't redo the postage paid CGW Poll cards: a trademark of this

magazine and emblematic of *CGW*'s cooperative outlook toward its readers. While I look forward to the changes, don't get too glitzy on us!

T. Madden
St. Louis, MO

I'm sorry to hear that you've been bought by Ziff-Davis. I guess this means that *CGW* will become nothing more than another voice for Microsoft. I will not be subscribing.

Patrick Sklenar
Coventry, CT

Actually, the Ziff-Davis deal was a hospitable *takeover. As for getting too glitzy, it is our intent to make sure that the design reflects the content and vice-versa. Ziff-Davis purchased us because they liked what we were doing and believed that our editorial philosophy was compatible to their philosophy. As for other Ziff publications providing Microsoft propaganda, I can only say that I believe this would come as a great shock to Microsoft. A lot of people think Bill Machrone (PC Week and PC Magazine) and John Dvorak (PC Magazine) have an anti-Microsoft bias. When columnists are shot at from both sides, it is often a good sign that they have some sort of objectivity.*

Sounding Off

Great article on Sound Cards in the new issue. However,

1) it looks as though part of the concluding remarks didn't get printed;

2) since the authors mentioned that one option is to have a SB card for digital sounds and then add a Roland for General Midi, I would like to see a follow-up article on how this would be done. (How do you hook up both cards to the same set of speakers and which card do you select when installing the game. Would both cards use the same IRQ?); and

3) since they mentioned CD-ROM interfaces on a (sound) card, I need to know if you need one on a sound card for a CD-ROM program to work with it or if a normal SCSI controller will do.

Chris
Prodigy

Mike Moondawg Weksler responds:

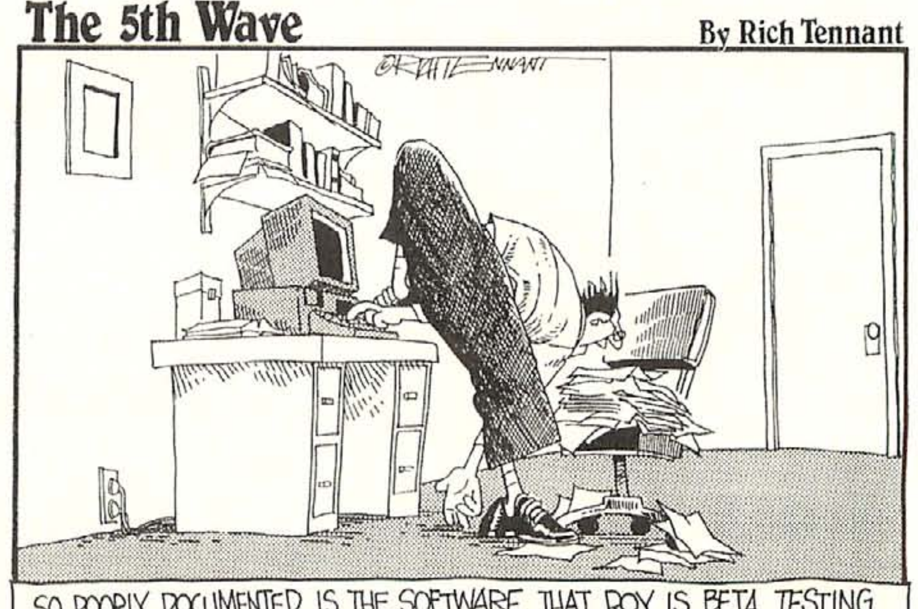
1) That comma at the end of the article should have been a period. Our editor inserted a sentence rambling on about how inadequate home theater is in its current incarnation, but it really didn't matter.

2) With regard to hooking up speakers when running digital audio out of one card and wave table synthesis out of the other, you have a few options. One would be to run the Line Out from the wave table synthesis card (i.e., the Roland) into the Line In on your digital sound card (i.e. the Pro AudioStudio). Then, you can run a Line Out from your digital sound card to either your amplified speakers or your music system. Another option would include the use of a low cost mixing board from Radio Shack. Output from both cards would run into the mixing board where a single output would run into your single set of speakers. This is a handy way to have precise volume control at your fingertips.

You would select the Sound Blaster card for your speech and your Roland for the music separately in a given game's hardware installation.

Both cards would require separate IRQs. A standard configuration is to have the Sound Blaster on IRQ (interrupt)7, I/O at 220. The Roland (or most wavetable cards) default at IRQ 2, I/O 330.

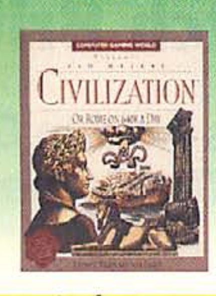
3) Depending upon which CD-ROM you have, games may run with both configurations—a CD-ROM drive will run either off of your sound card, such as the 50 pin SCSI host on the Pro AudioStudio card or, the proprietary 40 pin Panasonic host on the Sound Blaster Pro cards. A CD-ROM drive may also run off of a dedicated SCSI host card. Games don't seem to care one way or the other, although it would be in your best interest to get the fastest CD-ROM interface for your computer. An example would be one of the 16-bit SCSI host cards which have some RAM on them to speed things up a bit. One small point worth mentioning is that the CD-ROM host on the sound card should be disabled when running a stand-alone SCSI host so the two cards do not conflict with each other. We hope these tips help. CGW



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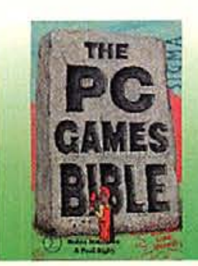
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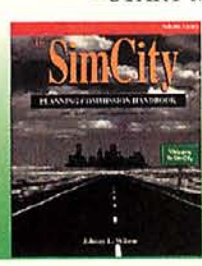
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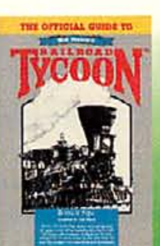
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Plant The Silver Seed And Watch Britannia Grow

Origin's Add-in Disk Expands *The Serpent Isle*



by Scorpia

Though the Avatar has often stood alone against the forces of evil in the Ultima universe, Origin's *Silver Seed* cannot. It is an add-in disk for *Ultima VII, Part Two: Serpent Isle* which requires that *Serpent Isle* reside on your hard drive in order to play. There is little point in buying this add-in disk if you have already finished *Serpent Isle*, unless you plan on playing it again. The new adventures in *Silver Seed* are self-contained, and the main reason for their existence is to provide certain items and updates for *Serpent Isle* that make playing the game less of a hassle.

On the other hand, these changes really make *Silver Seed* worth getting if you haven't played *Serpent Isle*, or haven't gone too far into it. What it provides are six new items and three new hot-keys. Two of these items in particular are especially notable.

The first is the magic key ring that works in conjunction with a new 'K' hot-key. All of your keys go onto the ring, after which you can forget about them. When you come to a locked door, hitting 'K' brings up a cursor which you must position over the lock. If you have the right key on your ring, the door will be unlocked. No more rooting through backpacks to try keys one at a time or becoming confused over look-alike keys.



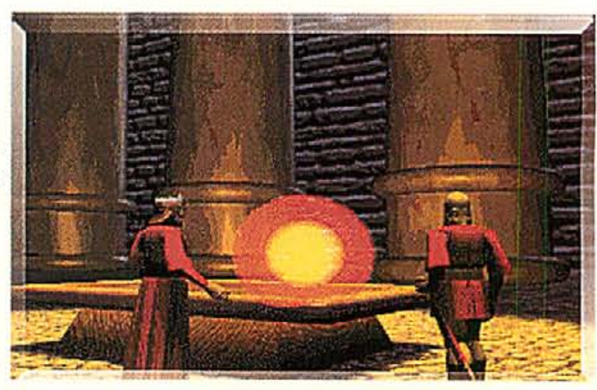
The second is the Ring of Endless Reagents. With this nifty item in hand you can kiss your bag of reagents good-bye. No more reagents to buy, ever again. The spells you can cast are limited only by magic points. It's nice to look at the spell book and see the numbers under the spells replaced by infinity symbols.

The other items are a powerful (but non-throwable) magic axe, the Helm of Light, the Belt of Strength, and the Gauntlets of Dexterity. The belt and gloves give +10 to strength and dex, but there is a little problem associated with these that we'll come to a bit later.

Picking locks becomes less trouble with a new 'P' hot-key. Hitting 'P' brings up a target cursor to position over the lock. You no longer have to rummage through your entire inventory to try a door.

Finally, feeding the party has been made easier with a new 'F' hot-key. Whenever someone starts whining about an empty stomach, just hit 'F' for a target cursor. Position it over the peckish character and zap those tummy grumbles away. As long as *anyone* in the party is carrying food, the person will be fed. This one feature is almost worth the price of admission all by itself.

The storyline of the game doesn't amount to much. Karnax, head of the Xenkan monks, pops up with the newly-found Amulet of Balance, which he hands to the Avatar and says, in essence, "figure out what it does, because we don't know." As it turns out, the amulet is used on a serpent gate to transport the party back to the past, to the time when the war between Order and Chaos was in full swing.



The ostensible goal is for the Avatar to find and plant the silver seed, which will grow into the Tree of Balance and help (in some mystical, undefined way) to restore Balance to the land. (And I thought this was what we were doing in *Serpent Isle* by reuniting the three Great Serpents.)

In actuality, you're just there to pick up the goodies (and get the new hot-keys installed), since planting the seed has no effect on the

The Silver Seed



TITLE:	The Silver Seed
PRICE:	$29.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	Ultima VII, Part Two: Serpent Isle, 4MB additional hard drive space
DESIGNERS:	Brian Adams, Bruce Adams, David Beyer, Lisa Smith, Phil Sulak
PUBLISHER:	Origin Systems Austin, TX (512) 335-5200

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main game—at least none that anyone has been able to find to date. Nothing really changes when you return to your own time. If you were hoping to undo some of the Banes' nasty handiwork, you'll be disappointed.



While *Silver Seed* fixes some problems (or at least annoyances) in *Serpent Isle*, the game brings a few of its own. The gauntlets and belt do not appear to work properly. For instance, after finding the gloves, naturally I put them on at once, only to see no change in the dex stat. The dexterity of the character was the same, no matter who wore them.

My initial thought was that, as stats don't go above 30, and everyone had better than 20 dex, the gloves wouldn't work for them. *However*, on rebooting the game, I noticed that Shamino (who was wearing the gloves) now had a dex of 30! Had I been mistaken?

Not quite. When I took the gloves off him, his dex dropped to normal, but putting them back on made no change in his dex, or anyone else's who wore them. So it would seem that, to get the benefit of the belt and gloves, you should save the game after they've been equipped, restore, and not take these items off again.

Another nasty situation reared up with the maze. Only the Avatar can go in there; party members refuse and voluntarily unjoin themselves from the group. Unfortunately, they unjoin themselves a little too late. The Avatar must go in sans armor and equipment; these are taken away upon entry and given back after exiting the maze. The same thing happens to anyone in the group when the Avatar goes to enter, only their stuff *doesn't* come back. Ouch! Make sure that everyone is out of the group before you go near the maze entrance.

The manual that comes with *Silver Seed* contains a small walk-through in the back. Obviously, Origin wants you to finish this one quickly so you can bring your new toys over to the main event, which isn't a bad idea. After all, that's why they're giving you this stuff.

Unfortunately, the walk-through contains some inaccuracies, mainly in the section dealing with the abandoned outpost. A body (with an important item) is noted as being at location 10, when it's really at location 11. The secret door in the west wall of the north/south entry passage is actually further north than is shown on the map.

The real toothgrinder, though, is the rubble-blocked corridor. The manual suggests using gunpowder to clear it. Even eight or nine kegs exploding in concert weren't enough to do the job, no matter how they were placed. An Origin on-line rep suggested putting a keg at "the thinnest point of the debris," which was the first thing I had tried.

Perhaps my idea of "thinnest" didn't coincide with theirs, or possibly the game is very position-sensitive, and I didn't get the exact right spot. Whatever, the kegs don't work, but plain muscle does. Just put the Avatar in combat mode and smack away at the debris a few times. I found a Juggernaut Hammer works nicely, and two blows were enough to clear a passage to the stairs. Other weapons may take a little longer, but it can be done.



Installation of the add-in makes some changes in the operation and save games of *Serpent Isle* in order to accommodate the new items and hot-keys. Since it is also adding a new physical location to the Britannia landscape, some saves from *Serpent Isle* may have to be deleted. This is clearly explained in the manual. I lost three or four saves myself, but these were mostly from near the end of the game, in the Temple of Balance. Earlier positions made the transition nicely.

However, users of *DRDOS 6* should be careful. *Serpent Isle* is known to be incompatible with this DOS, and Origin has a patch out for it. Unfortunately, early reports indicate that installing *Silver Seed* undoes the patch, rendering the game unplayable. If you use *DRDOS 6*, check with Origin before installing the add-in. By the time you read this, they may have an upgrade or other workaround for the difficulty.

Overall, while *Silver Seed* isn't a terrific game in itself and has a few problems, it will certainly make playing *Serpent Isle* a little more enjoyable. Anyone who is playing, or plans on playing, *Serpent Isle*, should make their lives easier and pick it up. **CGW**

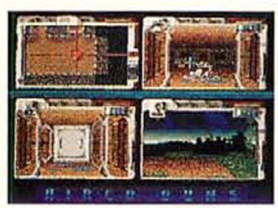
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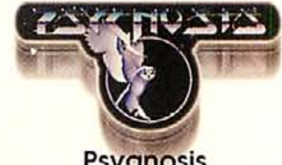
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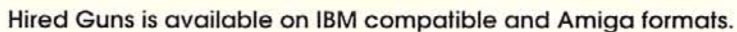


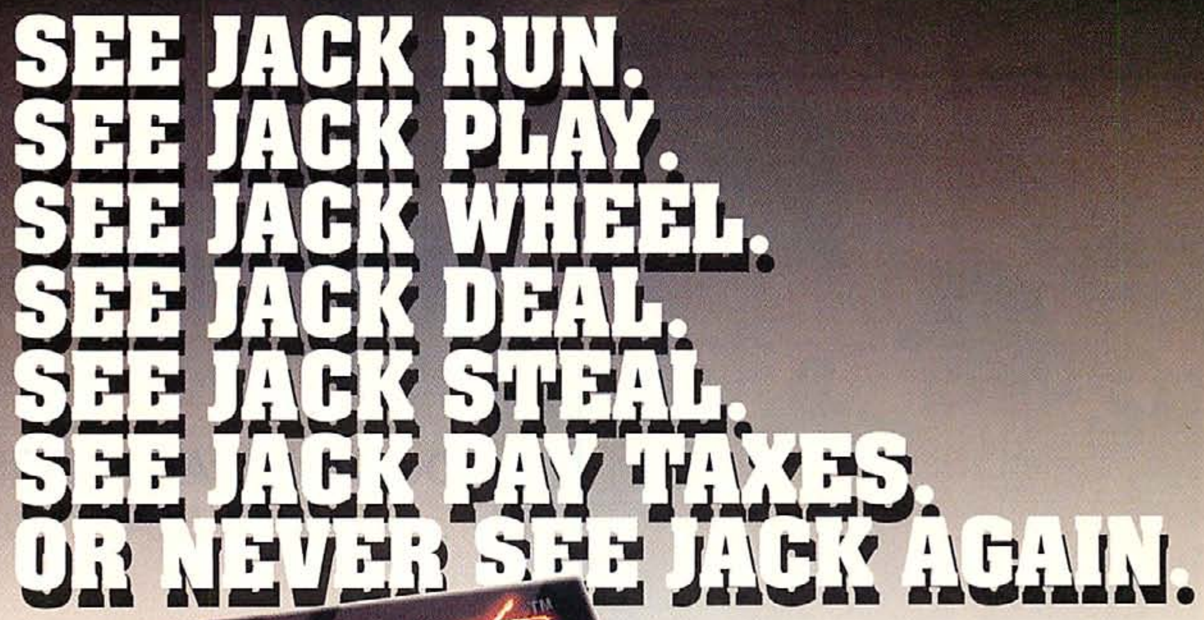






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Hired Guns is available on IBM compatible and Amiga formats.



Meet Jack Ladd, a jack of all trades, most of them illegal. Jack's in big trouble. You see this is the future and now the IRS has the right to use deadly force to collect taxes. Guess what Jack, the tax man commeth, and they're looking for the gazillion bucks you owe them. Now you have only 28 days to get them the money, how you do it is up to you.

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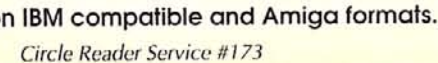


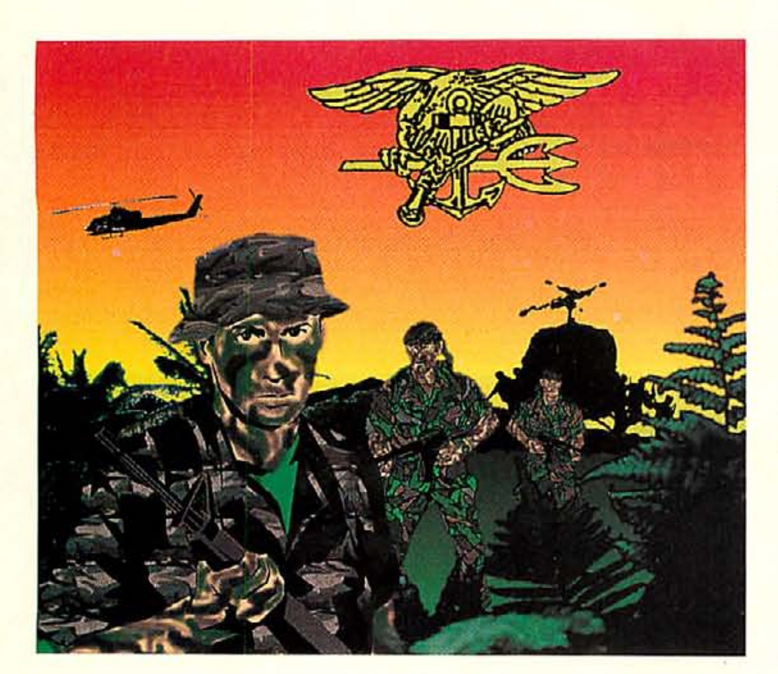




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SEAL'D WITH A FIST

Delivering An Effective Blow With *SEAL Team*

by Jeff James

Stories of young lieutenants greener than elephant grass leading boys into the dense undergrowth of Vietnam and getting chewed up are legion. The dangers included not only an NVA encounter, but also falling into pits with sharpened punji sticks arrayed like bayonets, or tripping a "bouncing betty" mine with a shaped charge designed to maim, not kill. Learning effective ways to prevent and deal with such hazards was an ongoing challenge squad leaders faced.

In **Electronic Arts'** *SEAL Team*, the player controls a squad of U.S. Navy SEALS through up to four years of the Vietnam War. After spending a few weeks coaxing SEALs through the pixelated Mekong delta in *SEAL Team*, I've learned a few things that may help SEAL commanders overcome the obstacles I faced in my early duty. Here are the tactics and procedures that helped keep Lt. "Lunchmeat" and his squad alive through many harrowing combat missions.

1. BAMCIS

A mnemonic device used by the U.S. Marine Corps to aid commanders when leading troops, BAMCIS can be effectively applied for use with *SEAL Team*. BAMCIS is an abbreviation for the following tactical steps:



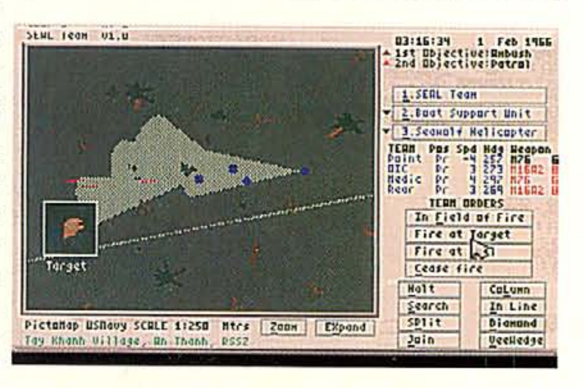
Begin planning the operation; Arrange for reconnaissance; Make the reconnaissance; Complete a plan of action; Issue the combat order; then Supervise the ongoing operation to guarantee that the objective is reached. When using BAMCIS with *SEAL Team*, the first three procedures should be performed even before the SEALs hit the combat zone. Studying the information presented in the Intel Briefing and Mission Briefing screens will give the player enough information to plan the operation, while the intelligence provided should be considered a preliminary recon report. After a tentative tactical plan of action has been devised, the combat order (i.e., moving the soldiers toward the objective) should be issued once the SEALs hit the combat zone. Finally, the player must supervise the movement and actions of the team en route to the objective. Using BAMCIS should be a continuous process; as events unfold during combat, the player should be ready to alter his plan of action to successfully complete the mission.

2. Patience Is A Virtue

In mission after mission, I learned that being patient is possibly the single most important skill a SEAL commander can possess. Since a SEAL team will almost always be outnumbered, outgunned, and far from home, biding time until the perfect opportunity to strike is vital. In several missions, enemy soldiers would walk within just a few meters of my hidden SEALs. Instead of opening fire when they came into range, I patiently waited until they passed my position and left the combat area. Once they were gone, I moved my SEALs into position to take the objective. Unless a player's SEALs are under fire, moving towards an objective or leaving the combat area, it's usually a good idea to sit, watch and wait.

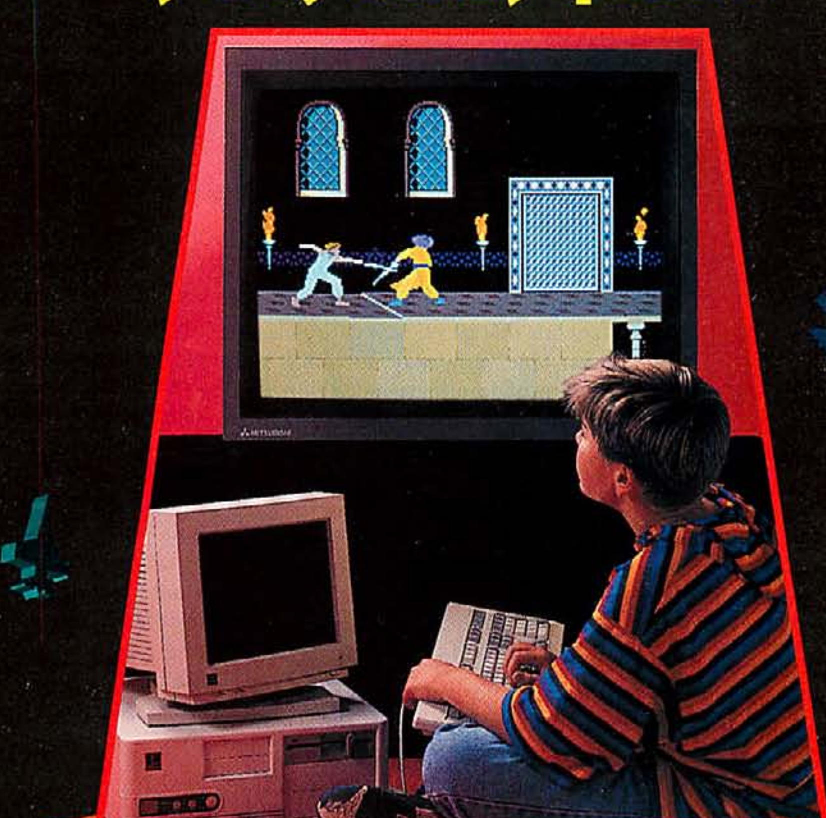
3. Mix It Up

In combat, being predictable will get your men killed. Insertion points, avenues of approach and exit routes can and should be altered often to confuse the enemy. Moving



down clearly marked trails is almost always a bad idea, as most will be booby trapped with pits or trip wires. Players should try something slightly out of the ordinary in every mission. Here are a few suggestions: create a diversion by using a grenade launcher to lob a grenade some distance from the enemy's position; split your team into two squads and attack from two directions; insert the squad a considerable distance from the original insertion point; use your fire support teams to draw enemy troops away from your objective. Players should be reasonable; don't try something too creative to be tactically sound.

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Keeping the enemy guessing will keep SEALs alive.

4. Know Your Gear

A plethora of weapon and tool types are available to a SEAL commander; knowing which equipment to take can mean the difference between victory and defeat. SEAL commanders should learn the weapon specialties of each SEAL and equip them accordingly. The mission should dictate the weaponry carried: an M72A2 LAW (light ant-tank weapon) may be perfect for taking out hardened enemy positions, but would be excess baggage during a rescue mission. The more equipment a SEAL carries, the slower he moves, making him a more vulnerable target. Keep in mind that SEALs tending captured enemy soldiers move slowly. SEALs already weighed down by 100 pounds of rocket launchers, grenades and ammunition will be scarcely able to move when moving captured enemy soldiers. Keep an eye on weapon ranges, too. A squad equipped with nothing but shotguns and pistols is in for a very bad day if forced to engage in a long-distance firefight.



5. Cover And Concealment

In basic training, many U.S. infantry are taught the maxim: "I'm up, he sees me, I'm down." This brief sentence summarizes the importance of cover and concealment. As in real life, keeping soldiers out of harms way requires that they be seen as little as possible by the enemy. SEALs advancing towards a heavily defended target in an upright position won't live long; keeping them in a prone or crouched position will make them harder to spot by the enemy. When planning a mission, it's a good idea to plot a course through areas with plenty of ground cover, using any man-made structures for cover and concealment as well. Keep low, stay clear of wide open areas and utilize any available foliage to keep SEALs hidden from view.

6. Conserve Ammo

Conserving ammunition is of paramount importance to any SEAL commander. The motto "One shot, one kill" is a wise one to follow. Wait until the last possible minute to engage the enemy. In most cases, I found that holding my fire until an enemy was close enough for the targeting reticle to turn yellow or red was enough to ensure a high probability of success. Frugal use of ammunition has other benefits besides the increased probability of a kill. It also translates into less ammunition being carried, resulting in faster moving, less-encumbered SEALs. It also attracts less attention: a SEAL who fires one shot is far less likely to be noticed than one that empties an entire magazine. One easy way to limit the amount of ammo expended during a firefight is to change the rate of fire (ROF) of a currently selected weapon. Pressing the 'R' key will cycle through the ROF options available for the current weapon. In almost all cases, keeping weapons on "semi" or "single" will yield the best results.

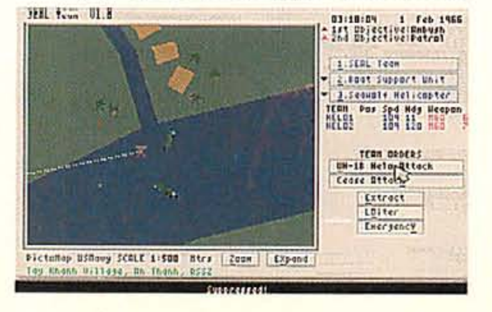
7. Silence Is Golden

Next to cover and concealment, keeping SEALs quiet is key to avoiding the enemy. Players can accomplish this by moving slowly in prone position with a cease fire order. It's also a good idea to stop occasionally and scan the area. Turning off the game music (ALT-M) and keeping on the game sounds will give players aural cues to the combat situation, with the noise of insects and birds changing when an enemy is approaching. Move slowly, keep low and fire controlled bursts.

8. Use Your Fire Support

In almost every mission, fire support teams are just a key press away. When SEALs are pinned down by enemy fire, bailing them out with the fire support vehicle is a viable and highly recommended course of action.

Fire support vehicles also work wonderfully as moving distractions. One tactic which worked well for me was to have a support helicopter fly over a heavily guarded objective



and then hover some distance away from the target area, on the opposite side of the objective as my SEALs. Any enemy soldiers in the area would often follow the helicopter, leaving the objective unguarded. Remember that supporting fire from helicopters and other aircraft can often stray quite a distance from the target area—players should keep SEALs a healthy distance away from any ground targets.

9. Use The Views

One of the many viewing options available to a *SEAL Team* player is the use of the enemy view, accessed by pressing the F9 key. When an enemy soldier has been seen and targeted by the point man, a targeting reticle will appear on the enemy soldier. Pressing the F9 key will shift the player's viewing position to the enemy's position. Holding the right mouse button down (or pressing button 2 on the joystick, if selected) and moving the mouse allows the player to peek around buildings, foliage and other obstacles for other threats. It's like having an invisible scout standing right next to the enemy. Pressing the F2 key will display a third person view of the point man and other SEALs, which is useful for viewing the surrounding terrain while the team is moving towards an objective.

10. Practice Makes Perfect

Finally, SEAL commanders should make frequent use of the Practice Missions program option, accessible from the main menu. Each of the 80 individual missions in *SEAL Team* are available for practice, allowing gamers to scope out mission areas before a real mission takes place. Practicing missions will save lives, minimize time spent in the mission zone, and ensure that each mission is a success.

In addition to the suggestions listed here, *SEAL Team* players may want to obtain a few books on the SEALs in Vietnam and the tactics they used. A wide selection of reference books are listed in the bibliography of the *SEAL Team* manual. From that list, I found the following books to be especially useful:

John Pimlott. *Vietnam: The History and the Tactics*. Crescent Books, New York. 1983

Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg. *Inside the VC and the NVA*. Ballantine Books, New York. 1992.

(The author would like to thank Sgt. Kevin N. Lawson U.S.M.C. for his assistance in preparing this article.) CGW

Chief Execution Officer

A Guide To Corporate Culture In The *Syndicate*

by Jeff "Do These Ties Come In Kevlar?" James

Date: 07 October 2097
To: CyberCorp Field Executive Trainee, Western European Territory
From: CyberCorp Internal Security (CCIS)
RE: CyberCorp Field Executive Operations Manual

The position of Field Executive for the CyberCorp Syndicate is a challenging but rewarding position. As leader of a squad of Field Agents, your tasks are many and varied: you must simultaneously serve as a territorial administrator, tax collector, strategic planner and tactical field commander. Due to the complexity of your mission, we at CyberCorp Internal Security (CCIS) have prepared this document to aid you. This material will give you the information you need to embark on a lucrative career with The Company and increase CyberCorp market share at the expense of our rival Syndicates.



SECTION 1.0: Administration

1.1: Choose or lose

One of the first challenges you will face as a CyberCorp executive will be that of choosing which territory to invade. Keep in mind that regions with large populations will contain the toughest opposition. If your agents are relatively inexperienced and lack advanced weaponry, choose a less populous territory.

1.2: The cyborg tax man cometh

Taxes are the lifeblood of CyberCorp. Without the timely collection of funds from our willing citizenry, it would be impossible to maintain CyberCorp's aggressive marketing efforts. Most territories will start out at 30 percent taxation and can be easily increased to 40 percent. It's a good idea to keep your tax rates fairly low until you've conquered large tracts of territory. As the CyberCorp empire grows, be sure to tax your territories appropriately. As we become stronger, it is only fair that our citizens are taxed to reflect the privileges they enjoy under our leadership.

1.3: Agent management

Our cyborg agents are our bionic eyes, ears, hands and fists. It is through our agents that you will accomplish all of your goals as a CyberCorp executive. Upgrading agents is essential: without timely enhancement, our agents will become next to useless against the more advanced minions of our rival Syndicates. Following is a list of physical enhancements ranked from highest to lowest priority.

Brains: Enhanced artificial intelligence enables agents to recognize and respond to enemy actions more quickly. Reaction time and initiative are essential in the tougher territories where a few second of delay can mean life or death. The Syndicate that strikes first will often win the battle.

Chest: Consider the chest upgrade as glorified armor. The better the armor, the more punishment an agent will be able to endure. An agent attempting the Atlantic Accelerator territory without a Level 3 chest enhancement is destined for the reusable waste heap.

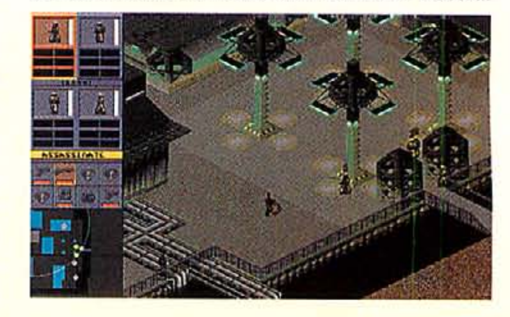
Legs/Heart: Both of these upgrades are important. Improved legs increase the movement speed of your agents, while enhanced hearts boost health and increase regenerative ability. With Level 3 legs, lightly-equipped agents can run as fast as the fastest ground cars.

Arms: Arm enhancements will increase the carrying ability of agents, allowing them to carry more and heavier objects. You should have the arms of your agents upgraded eventually, but you should consider this a fairly low priority.

Eyes: Our research has shown that bionic eye implants are highly overrated. Agents will identify enemy agents sooner and shoot better at a distance with implants, but these features are superfluous in the toughest scenarios. Extensive analysis of agent combat actions reveals that more than 75% of tactical encounters are decided between short and middle range.

1.4: Arms control

While waging war with enemy Syndicates you'll find that some weapons are undoubtedly more useful than others. For all practical purposes, the pistol, shotgun and even the Uzi should be considered weapons for the uninitiated. They're cheap and available from the outset, but are woefully inadequate for most missions. By far the most popular weapon in the CyberCorp armory is the minigun. A powerful short- to medium-range weapon with incredible stopping power, the minigun packs an impressive amount of ammunition. The flame-thrower is another useful weapon; nothing seems to destroy structures and vehicles with as much visceral

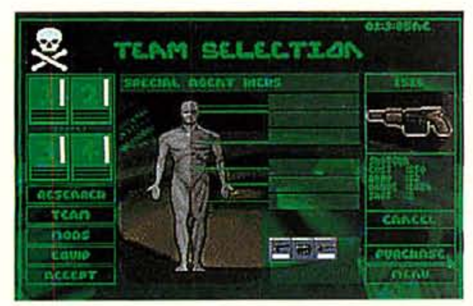


impact as a few flares from one of these. The gauss gun (rocket launcher) and the laser are also worthy of note: both are extremely powerful weapons, but the limited amount of ammunition makes them less effective than they initially appear to be. Trust your miniguns in the heat of battle and they will see you through to victory.

SECTION 2.0: Combat

2.1: Choose your position well

As CyberCorp management is so fond of saying, there are three important rules when supplying product to a consumer: location, location, location. This maxim also holds true in combat. Before a mission, study the layout of the mission area. If your mission is to eradicate enemy agents, find a defensible, secure area with only one or two access routes, then let the enemy come to you. Secondly, keep your agents in view of your command



ship at all times. Due to the unique viewing angle afforded by the hovership, your view of your agents may be blocked by buildings. Trying to direct the actions of agents hidden within structures or behind walls is a recipe for disaster—keep them in sight at all times.

2.2: Drivers education for androids

Nothing is more seductive to a squad of exhausted agents than a fast ground car. Perfect for covering vast distances of territory quickly, ground cars unfortunately have a darker, more deadly flip side. Ground cars are extremely flimsy vehicles, prone to burst into flames after receiving just a few bursts from a minigun or flame-thrower. You should use ground cars only in areas free of enemy activity. Obtaining a vehicle is simple: a quick burst from an Uzi or minigun is understood by our citizens to mean that you wish to borrow their vehicle for official business.

Also, note that even the best armored cyborg needs to look both ways before crossing any thoroughfare. A surprising number of our agents have been damaged or eliminated in collisions with ground cars. Remember: stop, look and listen.

2.3: When outgunned, head for cover

In some territories, our enemies will have more powerful weapons than we have. This is especially troublesome if the enemy owns long-range weaponry, able to strike your agents from afar with impunity. The solution to this dilemma is a simple one: move your agents around the corner of a building or place them inside one, and wait. Let the enemy come to you.

2.4: Stagger your ammo

An oft overlooked problem of weapon use is simultaneous reload periods. If all of your agents are given fully-loaded magazines at the start of a mission, they may run out of ammo at roughly the same time and be forced to switch weapons, creating a window of opportunity for the enemy. In a furious firefight, nothing is worse than having your agents all vulnerable at once. Allow one or two agents to fire a few rounds of a new magazine to insure that you will have at least one agent ready to respond while other agents reload.

2.5: Collateral damage is an agent's best friend

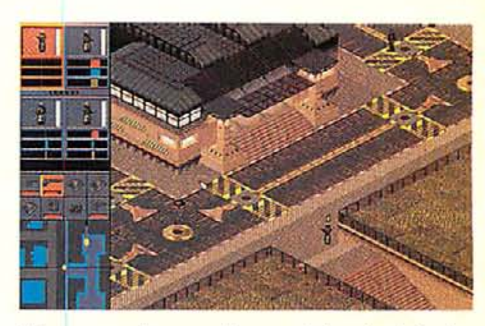
Nothing beats area effect weapons (gauss guns and time bombs) for mass destruction. A gauss gun round fired into a pack of enemy agents will disable most of them. Placing a time bomb or two along the expected approach routes of enemy agents can yield results, too; simply shoot the time bombs when the enemy runs past them. Finally, nothing seems to explode as nicely as a moving ground car. Pin the enemy next to a vehicle with minigun fire, then hit the car with a gauss gun. The resulting explosion will eliminate most enemy agents (and civilians, police and even your agents—keep your distance!) in the surrounding area.

2.6: Panic mode

Perhaps the most useful feature of our latest production run of cyborgs is the panic mode. Activated when both buttons are depressed on your control device, panic mode places each agent in an autonomous state with heightened senses and reflexes. When in panic mode, agents will automatically fire on any enemies that come within range and will move at nearly twice their normal rate. Placing just one agent into panic mode will give you a valuable sentry, while an entire squad in panic mode turns into a hyperactive deathmachine that is frighteningly ferocious in its frenetic flailings.

2.7: Find an Uzi, pick it up, and all that day...

When an enemy agent, guard or police officer is slain, he will usually leave behind his weapon. These weapons are as good as cash.



They can also provide a quick reload in the heat of combat.

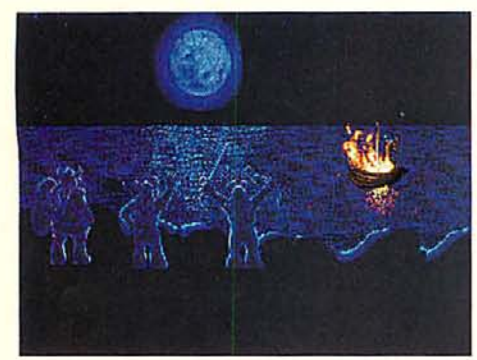
SECTION 3.0: The Atlantic Accelerator

As an informed CyberCorp executive, you're undoubtedly aware of the importance of the territory commonly referred to as the "Atlantic Accelerator." Several teams of our agents have attempted to overtake this territory, but all have met with little success. These failed missions were not entirely fruitless, as our knowledge of the territory is now much greater. One successful strategy involves equipping each of your four agents with four miniguns, two gauss guns, one medikit and one force field. Once you arrive in the mission area, immediately engage panic mode and move as quickly as possible to an area in which you are better able to protect your agents. Limit the enemy's avenues of approach, use your gauss guns for maximum collateral damage, and expend your munitions frugally—our research shows that 73 percent of failed missions are due to the squad running out of ammunition. Remember, a squad without ammo can do nothing but await a cruel piecemeal dismantling.

We at CCIS sincerely hope this information will be useful to you. The ongoing battle with our enemy Syndicates requires that we demand the utmost from our employees; we don't take failure lightly. And remember—whatever you do, we'll be watching.

The CCIS would like to thank special agent James "Vorpal" Joule III of the Syndicate "Rogue America" for his invaluable assistance in the creation of this briefing. CGW





Vikings Just Wanna Have Fun

Interplay's *The Lost Vikings*

by David M. Wilson

What do you get when you cross The Mario Brothers, The Three Stooges, Yosemite Sam and Hagar the Horrible? The answer is something close to **Interplay's** *The Lost Vikings*. The title may sound something like a new role playing game, but it is really a clever blend of comedy and puzzle solving.

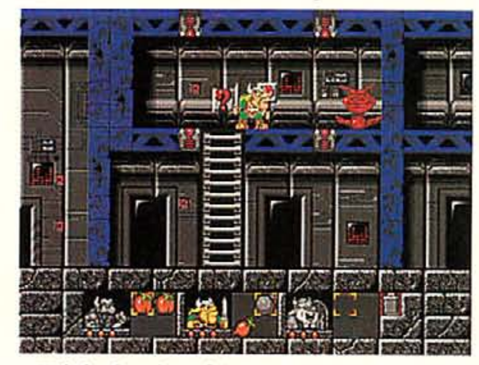
The fiction behind this multiple level cut-up is like something out of *The National Tattler*. An evil alien with the less-than-impressive name of Tomator kidnaps three Vikings and imprisons them aboard his spaceship. Naturally, they attempt to escape and, in so doing, travel through various time warps and dimensions in a whimsical attempt to find their way home.

The object of the game is to progress through 37 levels and defeat the alien boss monster on the last level. Each level is chock-full of traps and tricks to prevent our boys' escape and, to make it equally daunting, all three Vikings must make it to the exit of each level in order for the player to advance.

Each of the three barbarian champions is unique. Eric looks like a Nordic version of Yosemite Sam and specializes in running and jumping. He can also head-butt his way through some walls. Baleog is the troupe's fighter. He is not only the sole Viking capable of destroying monsters, but his bow and arrows can also be used to flip switches and buttons in otherwise inaccessible places. Olaf the Stout carries a wooden shield to be used in blocking enemy attacks. He is also something of a Viking visionary, having discovered a sport from the future—hang-gliding. Using his shield, Olaf can hang-glide into areas where Erik and Baleog cannot go. Naturally, having Olaf properly deployed means that his shield can protect all three, while Baleog can shoot arrows at the threatening enemy.

At various points in the game, Baleog will need to shoot arrows in order to trip switches or punch buttons. However, if the player doesn't have one of the other Vikings properly placed to supervise the process, the arrow simply disappears. For example, at one point Baleog needs to shoot a screen's width plus a little bit more. He fires, but the arrow will not hit the target, no matter where the player positions Baleog, *unless* Eric is placed in a position to see the arrow fly true to its mark. The player must shoot the arrow and then quickly switch to the Eric character or the arrow will not hit the target. It doesn't make sense, but that's the way the game works.

Each Viking can hold up to four objects in his inventory. The most important objects are bombs, keys and food. Bombs can be placed to destroy walls or enemies. Beyond their obvious function, keys will be needed to turn off some laser beams, activate ceiling fans, and topple walls. Food can heal damaged health. Sadly, there is no treasure to plunder.



While the plot of the game is simplistic and early levels are easily solved, the levels gradually develop into quite a test of puzzle solving prowess. Most of the game consists of knowing where to take the Vikings in order to solve the puzzle, but parts of it require a bit more manual dexterity and hand-to-eye coordination. Nevertheless, it is not a typical joystick busting game because there are plenty of places to stop and breathe without any danger.

The bad guys were cleverly presented, whether they were mummies who walked with hands outstretched to convert our heroes into the walking undead; a villain who was a Baleog look alike; or the boss alien, Tomator (a giant green guy). The most *ingenious* enemy, however, was a simple arm and hand bouncing a rubber ball. The arm would stop and throw the ball, striking our heroic Vikings and moving closer for more attacks. This imaginative enemy had me laughing out loud, until he attacked the first time.

Another imaginative concept was introduced in the game. If the player returns to replay a level too often, the Vikings begin to grumble among themselves. If the player repeats a level 15 times, he gets a nasty message from Thor, who proceeds to declare that in "his day" Vikings always made it through a level the first time. These messages, along with the messages at the end of each level, add to the comedic environment of the game. Too bad the replay messages are the same throughout the entire game. After awhile they just get in the way of a good game and one tends to key right through them without reading them.

The musical soundtrack adds to the game's ambiance as well, since it provides melodic variations for each time/dimension frame being played. Fortunately, though, there is a toggle, because as good as it is, it gets really annoying after awhile.

While some might try to compare this game to *Lemmings* or *Mario Brothers*, it really holds only a slight similarity to either. The puzzles aren't quite as intricate as those in the former nor the reflex challenges as intense as the latter. The game is a unique puzzle solving adventure, great for people who enjoy using their cerebral cortex along with their eye to hand coordination, and play-balanced well enough to make it worth their while. **CGW**

The Lost Vikings

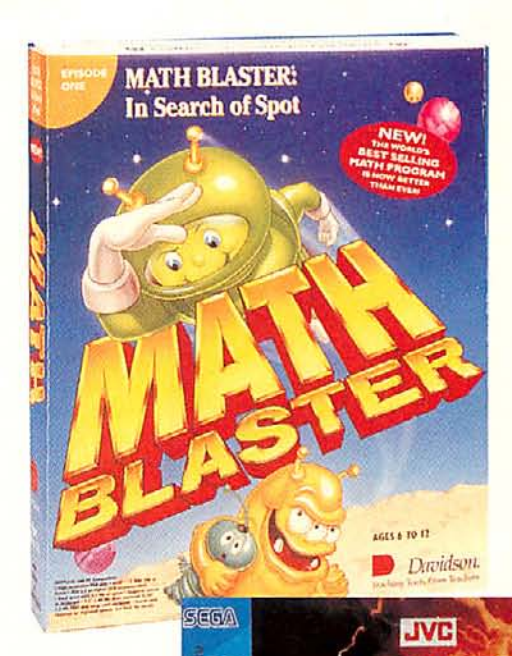


TITLE:	The Lost Vikings
PRICE:	$29.95
SYSTEM:	Amiga, IBM, Super Nintendo
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 386SX or better, VGA graphics, 1.7MB hard drive space; supports Ad Lib (Gold), Sound Blaster (Pro), Roland MT-32 (SCC-1) sound cards
PROTECTION:	Documention look up (on installation)
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COMPUTER WARGAMING WORLD

Winter (No) Quarters

Empire Deluxe Tournament Heads for Finals

by Alan Emrich

Sure, the holiday season is a time for peace, family and long winter's nights. But one can only be *so* civilized. At some point, encountering one more Christmas carol, movie, decoration or glass of eggnog during these dark days of December will drive a person to scream. If you are among these Yuletide curmudgeons, relax. Just whip out a wargame and peaceably take out your frustrations through simulated mayhem and destruction. It will keep you on Santa's "nice" list, and you will be much more fun to be around.

What has been very fun to be around this past month is our *Empire Deluxe* Tournament, co-sponsored by **New World Computing**. The semi-finals are over and an eastern and western champion have emerged. Next month, we'll have our grand prize winner and runner up. Our two defeated semi-finalists, however, in addition to their cool *Empire Deluxe* hat provided to all contestants by New World, will receive a one year subscription/extension to *CGW*. Hopefully, lifting these new, heavier issues will provide them the exercise they need to triumph in their next tournament!

Mark Conder vs. Mike Koln

In the western regional finals, a best of three match went to Mark Conder who won games 1 and 3. Each player won their first game as Green (after the scenario modifications put in place as described last issue), so they agreed that neither player could be Green in the last game. In the rubber match, Mark's blue horde over MAK's elite red troops by way of overwhelming production and some good fortune in battle.

Ray Matthews vs. Henry Gale

This was a battle royale. These two friends, who entered by signing up together in the same piece of e-mail, conducted a six game match where each would play both sides of every potential player combination in our three-way tournament scenario. At the end of the first four games, Ray was up 3-1 and looked like a shoe-in for the finals. Each time, Ray would take a production handicap of two, while Henry always took a combat handicap of two.

However, Henry came back in the last two contests, leaving the match tied at three victories apiece. A rubber match was required. Ray took blue, Henry green. Ray made an early attack against the computer player's red capital which seemed to have teed-off the computer player. It launched an all out retaliatory campaign, taking four cites from Ray by turn 44. Henry had only to remain patient and, when the time was right, simply march in and pick up the pieces from the vicious red-blue campaign. It was all over on turn 68, with Henry coming back from a 3-1 deficit to win the march 4-3.

Well, gentlemen, on to the finals! It is my understanding that at press time our two titans were preparing to grapple and were making further play balance suggestions. It looks as though they're up for a best of five match, and we'll bring you the results next issue.

On Top of the (Avalon) Hill

The rose (Jim Rose, to be precise) is starting to bloom at **Avalon Hill**. After signing up **Atomic Games** for two projects (*Operation Crusader*—their redesign of the *V For Victory* game engine and *Beyond Squad Leader*), they've moved beyond their past reputation in computer gaming by announcing that they were "back with a vengeance." With an ambitious schedule of future war and strategy games that are enhanced, computerized versions of their boardgame classics *Third Reich, Civilization, 5th Fleet* and *Blackbeard*, "The Hill" is certainly making a major commitment to computer gaming.

When asked why their next release, *Computer Third Reich* has been delayed, Jim Rose informed me that he has been keeping close tabs on what the grognards have been saying about *High Command* and *Clash of Steel* on the computer networks. Hearing customers lament over the current state of wargaming AI, he stated that Avalon Hill's policy will not be to release a game when it's ready, but rather when it's *good*. While I've heard this before from many others, Jim backed up his claim by sending a beta copy for me to examine (sans AI) and indicated that "when the AI is better, we'll release it." Not only is that the right attitude, but that is also a practical one considering the past reputation in computer gaming that Avalon Hill has to overcome. (Would that all computer game companies could afford such delays in releasing titles until they're more perfected.)

Until next issue, so long from the bunker. One final bit of advice to my brother wargamers: kiss your sweetheart under the missile tow this year—a TOW Missile in the kisser is not acceptable even if her family *does* come to visit. I hope you find some quiet time both for thee and thine and thy hobby, wargaming. CGW

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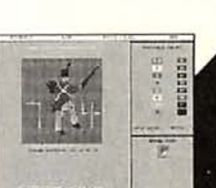
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Power Game Bundle 2..........32
Prince of Persia 2 45
PrintShop Deluxe 47
Privateer 52
Privateer Mission Disk 1 22
Privateer Speech Pack 22
Prophecy 27
Putt Putt Joins the Parade ..33
Putt Putt's Fun Pack 25
Quarterpole 35
Quest Glory 4 43
Quest for Glory III 43
Railroad Tycoon Classic 22
Railroad Tycoon Deluxe 43
Rampart 29
Realms of Arkania 37
Red Baron 43
Red Crystal 37
Return of the Phantom 37
Return to Zork 47
Rome 37
Rules of Engagement 2 43
Sam & Max Hit The Road 40
San Francisco Scenery 32
Scenery Editor 27
Scenery Grand Canyon 22
Scenery Tokyo Japan 22
Seal Team 40
Seawolf 43
Seven Cities Gold 35
Shadow of Yserbius 27
Shadowcaster 45
Sharif on Bridge 32
Shuttle Space Flight 37
Siege Walls of Rome...........37
Silent Service 2 Classic 22
Silverball...........................34
Sim Ant 37
Sim Ant Windows 37
Sim City 2000 43
Sim City Classic DOS..........27
Sim City Windows 37
Sim Earth 37
Sim Earth Windows 37
Sim Farm 35
Sim Life 32
Simon the Sorcerer.............34
Slater Charlie Go Camping .32
Smokin' Gun Windows 30
Solitaire's Journey 37
Space Hulk 40
Space Quest 5 37
Spaceward Ho! 37
Speed Racer Racer X..........37
Spellcast Springbreak 37
Star Trek 25th Anniversary .37
Star Trek Judgement Rights.37
Star Trek Next Gen. 47
Stonekeep 48
Street Fighter II 37
Strike Command Miss 1......22
Strike Comm. Speech 20
Strike Squad 40
Strip Poker Data Disk 1 18
Strip Poker Professional......35
Stronghold 40
Super Ships of the Atlantic .22
Super Tetris Windows 35
Surf Ninjas.........................30
SVGA Harrier......................52
Syndicate 37
Syndicate American Revolt ..22
Take a Break Pinball Wind...32
Terminator 2029 43
Terminator 2029 Op. Scour 22
Terminator Rampage..........43
Tetris Classic 32
Tetris Classic Windows 32
The Blue and The Gray 43
The Dig.............................43
The Elder Scrolls The Arena.43
The Great War 1914-18 47
The Labyrinth 37
Third Reich........................37
Tom Landry Deluxe 32
Tony Larussa Baseball 2 40
Tony Larussa II AL/NL 19

Tony Larussa II Draft 16
Tony Larussa II Player 16
Tornado 52
U.S. Atlas for Windows 54
Ultima 7: Forge of Virtue 22
Ultima 7:The Black Gate 50
Ultima Underworld II 52
Ultima Stygian Abyss 25
Ultima VII Silver Seed.........22
Ultima VIII Pagan 52
Ultrabots 39
Uninvited Windows.............40
Unlimited Adventures 37
USA East Scenery Disk 43
V Victory 4: Gold Sword 43
Victory at Sea.....................45

Mouse Yoke 29
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Victory Pak........................47
Walker..............................32
War in the Gulf 34
Warlords 2 43
WC 2 Ops 1 & 2 Pak..........27
When Two Worlds War 37
Where Space Carmen Del ...50
Where in World Deluxe 48
Winball Windows...............30
Wing Commander/Ult. 6 39
Wing Comm. 2 Speech 27
Wing Comm. Academy 35
Wing Commander Deluxe 50
Wing Commander II 25
Wizardry Trilogy 2..............37
WolfPack CD Rom...............45
World Circuit Grand Prix 37
WWII Battles South Pacific ..37
X Wing MD 2 B Wing...........22
X-Wing 42
X-Wing Mission Disk 1 22

ACCESSORIES

Art of the Kill 29
CD Rom Caddie 7
CS 150 Speakers 29
CyberMan..........................83
Gameblaster 115
Mitsumi CD Rom Drive 299
Mouse Mat Single 8
Notebook Gameport...........47
Sound Blaster Speakers......22
V32 Internal Fax Modem ...169

CONTROLLERS

Analog Joystick 32
Analog Plus 27
Aviator Yoke 29
Eliminator Game Card 29
Flight Control Pro 115
Flight Stick 39
Flight Stick Pro 62
FX 2000 27
G Force Yoke 59
Gameport 2 MCA 22
Gameport III Automatic 34
Icontroller 39
Icontroller for Laptops 39
Intruder Joystick 29
Mach I 17
Mouse Wheel 29

Pro Audio Spectrum 16 189
Sound Blaster 16 219
Sound Blaster 16 ASP 219
Sound Blaster Deluxe..........89
Sound Blaster Pro Deluxe..122
Sound Blaster Pro MCA......258
Sound Galaxy NX Pro 16....132
Sound Machine w/PC Kit.....99
Soundman 16 129
UltraSound 119
Voice Blaster.....................72

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Wave Blaster...................236
ACM Game Card 35
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After Dark Trilogy (M) 69
All Beauties 39
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American Journey 42
Animals 34
Animation Fantasies 2 69
Animation Fantasies 69
Arthur's Teacher Trouble....30
Astrology Source 52
B17 & Silent Service Combo 39
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Best of Vivid (I) 69
Betrayal (M) 69
Bible Library 39
Blue Force 43
Britannica's Family Choice 39
Busting Out (M) 69
Busty Babes 2....39
Cafe Flesh (M) 44
Camp Double D (I) 44
Cat and Mouse (I) 69
Chess Maniac 43
ChessMaster 3000 32
College Girls (M) 44
Condo Cuties (M) 44
Conspiracy 48
Creepy Crawlies....49
Creme De Le Creme 44
Cute & Cuddlies 45
Dare Bluff or Die 42
Dark Sun Shattered Lands 54
Debbie Does Dallas (M) 44
Deep Throat (M) 69
Digital Dancing (I) 69
Digital Dreams 44
DirtyTalk (I) 69
Doors of Passion (I) 69
Dracula Unleashed 52
Dream Machine (I) 69
Dune 59
Education Master 37
Educational Gameland 20
Encyclopedia of Clip Art 34
Eric the Unready 37
ErotiCafe 99
European Racer 43
Exotic Girls 39
Extreme Delight 44
Eye of the Beholder 1,2,3 Bundle 54
Eye of the Beholder 3 32
F117A Stealth/F15 Strike Eagle 2....40

F15 Strike Eagle 3 59
Fantasies and Lifestyles....69
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Fatdog Exposed (I) 44
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Fractal Ecstacy 45
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Iron Helix 62
Island Girls 3 in 1 39
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Kama Sutra 69
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King's Quest 6 Upgrade 27
King's Ransom 37
L.A. Strippers (M) 69
Language Dicovery 32
Legends of Porn II (M) 44
Library of the Future 49
Local Girls 2 44
Loom 34
Lord of the Rings 47
Lost Treasures of Infocom 1 or 2 47
Lovely Ladies 2 44
Luscious Ladies 44
Mad Dog McCree 42
Mammals National Geographic 29
Man Enough (I) 47
Mantis: Experimental Fighter 47
Men Who Love Women 44
Mixed up Mother Goose 24
MM 2 Day of Tentacle 45
Moving Fantasies (M) CD Rom....44
Mystique of Orient 59
New Wave Hookers (M) 44
Night Trips (M) 69
Night Watch (I) 69
North American Indians 44
P.C. SIG Games 34
Paradise Club (I) 69
PC Sig Version 2 34
PGG 1 CD....32
Phoenix 3.0 15
Phone Sex 29
PhoneDisc Residential USA 59
Pork Ware 44
Princess of Persia (M) 44

Private Eye Mysteries 45
Private Pictures Vol. 1 69
Protostar War on the Frontier 43
Putt Putt Goes to the Moon 47
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Putt Putt's Fun Pack 39
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Rebel Assault 52
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Return to Zork 50
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Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe 29
Secrets (M) 69
Shakespeare's Complete Works 29
Shareware 1993 39
Shareware 1993 44
Shareware Explorer....50
Shareware Extravaganza 46
Shareware Overload 19
Shareware Studio 29
Sherlock Holmes Detective 1 or 2 32
Sherlock Holmes III 49
Shuttle Flight Simulator 27
Sleeping Beauty 35
Smutware 44
So Much Stareware 69
Soft Kill 32
Software Vault 2 37
Software Vault Gold 47
Southern Beauties 69
Space Quest 4 29
Sports Illustrated Almanac 39
Star Trek 25th Anniversary 47
Storm 4 44
Strike Commander 58
Super Smutware 44
Sweet Dreams 44
Swimware 1993 39
Talking Classic Tales 65
Talking Schoolhouses 39
Terrorist Group Profiles 44
The Journeyman Project 59
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Tony LaRussa 2 54
Total Baseball '93 Ed. 49
Total Fantasies 44
Traci I Love You (M) 44
Tropical Girls 39
Ultima Underworld/Wing Command 2 60
USA Wars: Civil War 39
Video Cube 43
Visual Fantasies (M) 69
Weekend at Ernie's (I) CD....44
Where in World Carmen Deluxe 39
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Windows 1993 34
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- AD&D Dungeon Hack 40
- AD&D Fantasy Empire 40
- Adventures Willie Bem 2......43
- After Dark Saver DOS..........35



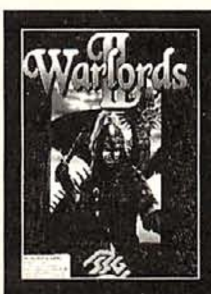
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- Ashes of Empire 37
- AutoWorks 47
- Baseball Windows..............43

- Beat the House 32
- Betrayal at Krondor 43
- Blades of Destiny 53
- Blood Net 43
- Bloodstone 30
- Blue Force 43
- Bram Stoker's Dracula 37
- Bridge 7.0 32
- Bridge Master Windows 37
- Brix.....................................24
- Caesar 37
- Carrier Strike 43
- Carriers at War 43
- Carriers at War 2 47
- Carriers War Const. Kit 37
- Center Court Tennis 15
- Champions 37
- Chess Maniac 5 PC 45
- ChessMaster 4000.............37
- Civilization Master Edition ...47
- Clash of Steel 43
- Coaster 20
- Cobra Mission 47
- Cohort II 22
- Comanche Max Overkill 47
- Comanche Mission Disk 1....28
- Comanche Mission Disk 2....35
- Command Adven Starship ..43
- Companions of Xanth..........37
- Conquer Windows...............43
- Conquered Kingdoms 37
- Conquered Kingdoms 1.......27

- Cuckoo Zoo 33
- Cyber Race........................43
- Dark Side of Xeen 45
- Dark Sun Shattered Land ...52
- Daughter of Serpents 21
- Deja Vu I/II: Ace Harding ...33
- Delta V...............................43
- Detroit 37
- Discov. Steps Columbus 37
- Dominion 40
- Doom.................................47
- Dragon Knight 3.................43
- Dune 2: Dynasty 37
- Dyno Quest 27
- Eagle Eye Mysteries 33
- Earth Invasion Windows.......27
- Easy Street 27
- Eight Ball Deluxe.................32
- El-Fish................................37
- Empire Deluxe 37
- Empire Scenario Builder......22
- Empire Deluxe Windows 37
- Eric the Unready 37
- Eternam.............................37
- Eye Beholder 1,2,3 Bundle ..47
- Eye of the Beholder 3 37
- Falcon 3.0 50
- Falcon 3.0 Mig 29 37
- Falcon 3.0 Fighting Tiger ...30
- Fatty Bear's Birthday...........35
- Fields of Glory 37
- Flashback 35
- Fleet Defend F-14 Tomcat....48
- Flight Sim Toolkit................37
- Flixmix 32
- Forgotten Castle 52
- Freddy Pharkas 43
- Front Page Sports Football ..43
- Front Page Football Pro 47
- **Gabriel Knight....................43**
- Game Maker 59
- Gary Grigsby's Pacific War ..47
- Gary Grigsby's War Russia ..47
- Gateway 2..........................37
- Geekwad Games of Galaxy ..25
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- Heirs to the Throne.............37
- High Command...................47
- Hong Kong Mahjong Pro 33
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- Hoyle's Book of Games 4....32
- IndyCar Racing 47
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- Lands of Lore 37
- Leasure Suit Larry 6............43
- Legacy Realm of Terror 43
- Legend Kyrandia 2 Fate.......40
- Leisure Suit Larry 5 27
- Life & Death II: The Brain ...32

- Links 386 Pro 42
- Links Banff Springs 22
- Links Course Belfry 22
- Links Course Innisbrook......22
- Links Course Mauna Kea 22
- Lost Files Sherlock 30
- Lost in Time 43
- Lost Treasures Infocom 2 ...32
- Lost Vikings 32
- Lucky's Casino 37
- Lunar Command 37
- Madden Football 2 3.5.........35
- MM 2 Day of Tentacle 40
- Masters of Orion 37
- MechWarrior 2....................43
- MegaFortress:Old Dog 28
- Metal and Lace 34
- Mickey's 123 2.0 22
- Mickey's ABC's 2.0 22
- Microsoft Arcade Windows...34
- Microsoft Flight Sim 5.0 49
- MM 4: Clouds of Xeen 43
- More Incredible Machine 32
- More Vegas Games Wind 22
- NanoTank Windows............30
- Naval America Atlantic 22
- Naval Scenario Builder 29
- New York Scenery Disk........32
- NFL Coaches Club Football ..43
- NHL Hockey '94...................43
- Out of This World 37
- P.T.O. 42
- Pacific Strike 52
- Pacific Strike Speech Pack ..20
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Meet Them... Midway!

World War II: Battles of the South Pacific

by M. Evan Brooks

World War II: Battles Of The South Pacific (BOTSP) is a simulation of naval strategy and tactics between 1942 and 1943. As either the Japanese or the Americans, the user assumes the role of theater commander fighting for supremacy in the Pacific in a plethora of scenarios.

"Quick Games" are small scenarios emphasizing a particular game mechanic and can be completed in an hour or two (*Flattops* is an evenly-matched, ahistorical carrier battle; *Seastrike* is a build-your-own surface battle similar to some of the campaigns in *Lost Admiral*; *Free4All* is similar to *Seastrike*, except one can choose carrier forces as well; *Amphib* offers an American invasion of a Japanese port; *Clash* is a major surface battle; *Mop-Up* is an engagement wherein the American forces attempt to secure total supremacy in the ending phases of a campaign; *Invade* offers a Japanese offensive early in the war; *Liberate* portrays an American attempt to free a major island).

"Battles" are intermediate-length scenarios, which may be completed in an evening



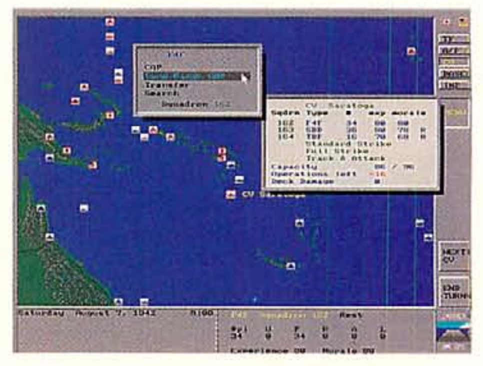
(*Yamamato* is a hypothetical slug-fest; *Coral* depicts the Japanese attempt to seize Port Moresby in 1942; *Midway* is the classic and decisive naval engagement of the Pacific).

"Campaigns" are long scenarios, with game-time running up to a year (*Coral Sea* begins in May 1942; *Solomons* begins in August 1942; *Esperance* begins in October 1942). Even if one does not wish to engage in a campaign, the option of using everything available offers a valid learning tool for the shorter scenarios as well.

The Written Word

The manual is a half-sized 100-page pamphlet. However, *South Pacific* is not geared for the *grognard* wargamer. Thus, the basic rules are covered in 23 pages, the advanced rules in 31 pages, and combat/scenario notes in the remainder of the documentation. The documentation is adequate. Any computer manual that notes that "the rules of the game are based upon common sense..." delivers a sense of foreboding to most users. However, *South Pacific* is in fact somewhat intuitive, and even a novice user will be able to maneuver around the mapboard and engage in combat. Being able to engage in combat effectively is another matter, and one that will require both a careful reading of the documentation, experience with the program, and intelligent planning.

The tactical/strategic hints are generic and may be summed up as "hit them hard—hit them first!" Good words of wisdom, but often difficult to achieve in an unbalanced scenario.



The documentation covers everything, but only actual play will enable the user to visualize how the different aspects of the program fit together. This is not difficult, it just does not translate well to paper. As long as the subject is potential mistranslation, I do wonder why a *Luftwaffe* field marshal ("Smiling

World War II: Battles Of The South Pacific

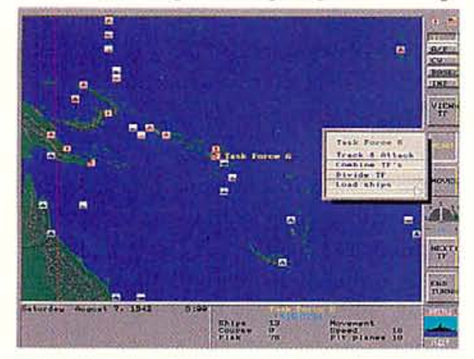


NAME:	World War II: Battles Of The South Pacific
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	286 or better, 1MB RAM, VGA graphics, 6.2MB hard drive space; AdLib and SoundBlaster sound cards supported
# OF PLAYERS:	0-2 (modem option)
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	Rod Olsen, Bruce Williams and Mike Isom
PUBLISHER:	Quantum Quality Productions 1046 River Avenue Flemington, NJ 08822 (908) 788-2799

Al" Kesselring, perhaps?) is prominently pictured in the manual. Perhaps this is another case of the Berg Theorem of Wargames (*i.e.*, to be successful, a wargame requires Nazis, Nukes, or NATO). But aside from Herr Feldmarschall wandering into the wrong theater, the documentation is accurate.

Star Spangled Soundtrack

The graphics and sound are well done, especially the sound. As the user prepares to give orders, his subordinate will respond vocally— and if one is playing the Japanese, in a *PIC* (politically incorrect) accent. The verbal acceptance of orders is amusing and the sound effects of depth charges, torpedoes and "bombs bursting in air" give proof through





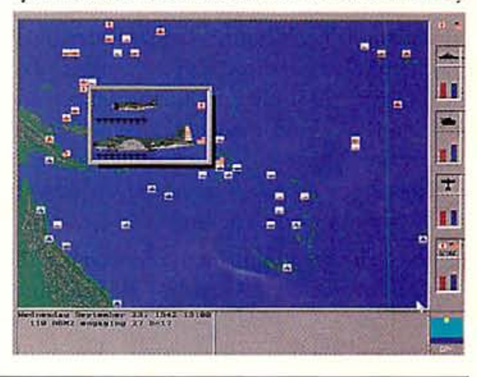
the night that sound can indeed play a factor in wargames.

A good variety of sound cards are supported and, for the first time, I was able to get digitized speech with my *PAS-16*. Actually, I was able to use the *PAS-16* option in the beta version; when the commercial version was released, the use of the *PAS-16* option caused continuous lock-ups. By changing to an *Ad-Lib* compatible setting, I was able to get adequate sound.

On first impression, the graphics are clear and well-done. They are reminiscent of an amalgam of *Carriers at War* (ship-to-ship/air-to-air engagement), *Pacific War* (strategic map), and *Empire Deluxe* (strategic map icons). However, as one continues to play, the graphics begin to pale somewhat.

The submarine-and-destroyer scenarios are interesting initially, but soon become relatively insignificant. It would have been nice to be able to turn off this portion of the graphics. But what is even more disconcerting is the "lessons learned."

When aircraft penetrate a surface fleet screen, the vessels are lined up linearly, in a depth up to three vessels. The user has an option to reallocate his fleet in any manner he chooses. Since the enemy aircraft always penetrate from left to right, optimal placement would be for the carriers to be in the extreme right flank shielded by escorts to the front. What is wrong with this is that it is completely ahistorical. Carrier task forces utilize a defense in depth, with virtually a symmetrical defense. An air threat can easily

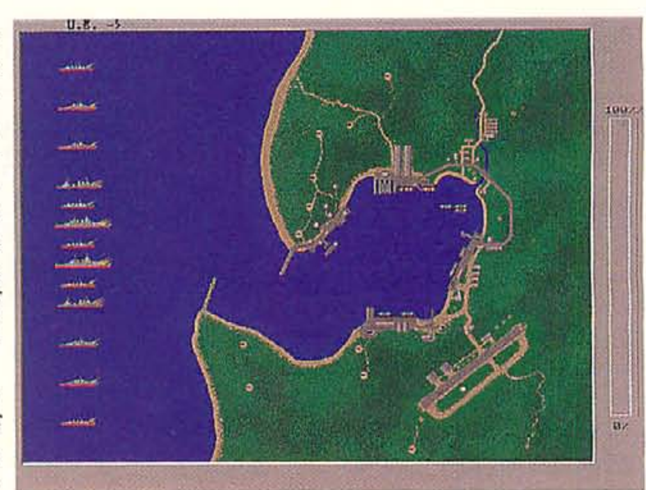


adapt to any direction, and in fact optimal torpedo bomber tactics called for a "Hammer/Anvil" approach in order to strike a vessel from two directions, thereby ensuring a broad target to at least one attack vector. The graphics herein, while enjoyable, do not teach a proper lesson to the user, and to a novice gamer, would in fact teach the wrong lessons of history.

Ship-to-ship engagements are handled *a la Carriers at War.* While the placements and movements of the fleets are not purely accurate, the rendition of the battle line moving forward to engage is somewhat more acceptable.

Engagements against surface installations are also depicted. The actual screen illustrates the fleet lined up to the lee side of the shore installation. Each hour, bombardments may occur, and while shore batteries may in fact be "heavy," I wonder about the caliber and accuracy of those depicted herein. Let the Aggressor Beware!—these shore batteries pack a tremendous punch, and an unwary fleet can go down to defeat.

Once the game is loaded, one can use the mouse to perform virtually all functions. Moving a task force is as easy as clicking on origin and then on destination. The route chosen also states the time necessary to arrive, and one may alter speed as well (although continuous combat speed is guaranteed to consume fuel and add to wear-and-tear). Victory is often determined by the judicious approach of reinforcements rather than a pell-mell rush of ships arriving in an exhausted and fuelless state.



Surprisingly, a game editor is not included. While some of the scenarios allow a free-form composition, it would have been an added bonus to allow the player to determine his own campaigns in the Pacific.

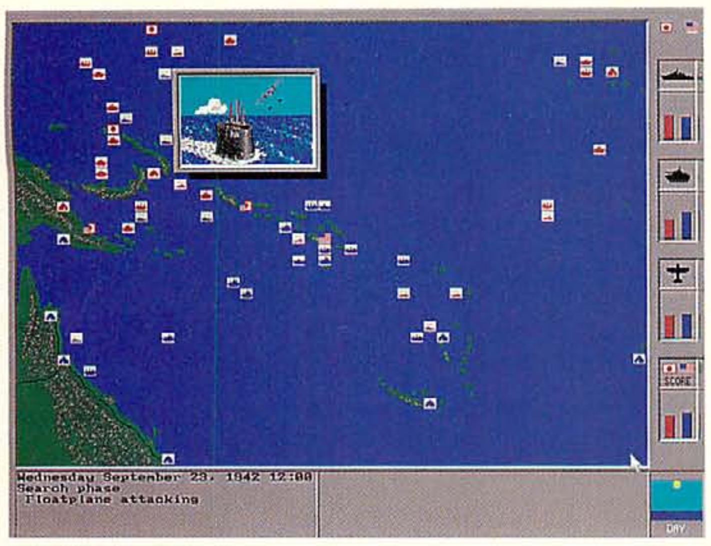
The advanced game allows one to tailor bombing missions for land (HE [high explosive]) or naval (AP [armor piercing]) targets, retrieve more details on individual ship damage, set up patrols, replenishment, etc. Again, virtually everything can be accomplished by a mouse click.

Find, Fix, Destroy!

Actually, the easiest way to understand the simulation is to do—nothing. Just put the simulation on computer versus computer, and watch the ensuing battle. Hopefully, the observer will gather sufficient knowledge as to be able to begin a scenario alone.

At no time will both sides ever be really equal in strength; even in the hypothetical scenarios, the inclusion of historical naval assets will mandate both different fleet compositions and qualities. The Japanese fleet has better torpedo capability (both on ship and plane) plus aircraft range, while the American fleet has better endurance. Determine the

Circle Reader Service #161



victory conditions and react accordingly. It does little good to have sunk the enemy fleet when the victory conditions called for occupation of an island.

In the simplified menus, air strikes may be either standard (bombers only) or full (bombers plus fighter escort). Be sure to divide the fighters into a squadron to leave on CAP (combat air patrol). The game simply has each type of plane in a separate squadron (e.g. fighter, dive bomber, torpedo bomber). Historically, this was not correct, but *South Pacific* was not meant to be a detailed historical simulation. Therefore, one should divide the fighters into separate squadrons.

The bombers do not have to be split, and actually they should stay together in order to achieve a unified strike and overwhelm the enemy's defenses. The only exception is to draw a few planes off in order to use them as spotters. One can't strike if he doesn't know the location of the enemy.

Be sure to access all units—task forces, air fields, etc. Do not get distracted by a carrier battle only to forget to commit land-based air. Remember, carrier air is important, but it is much more fragile than land-based air.

As the American, torpedo bombers are good for searches. Their use in a combat offensive role is to act as a magnet for enemy ammunition. Rarely will one achieve success with torpedo bombers; such was history, such is the game.

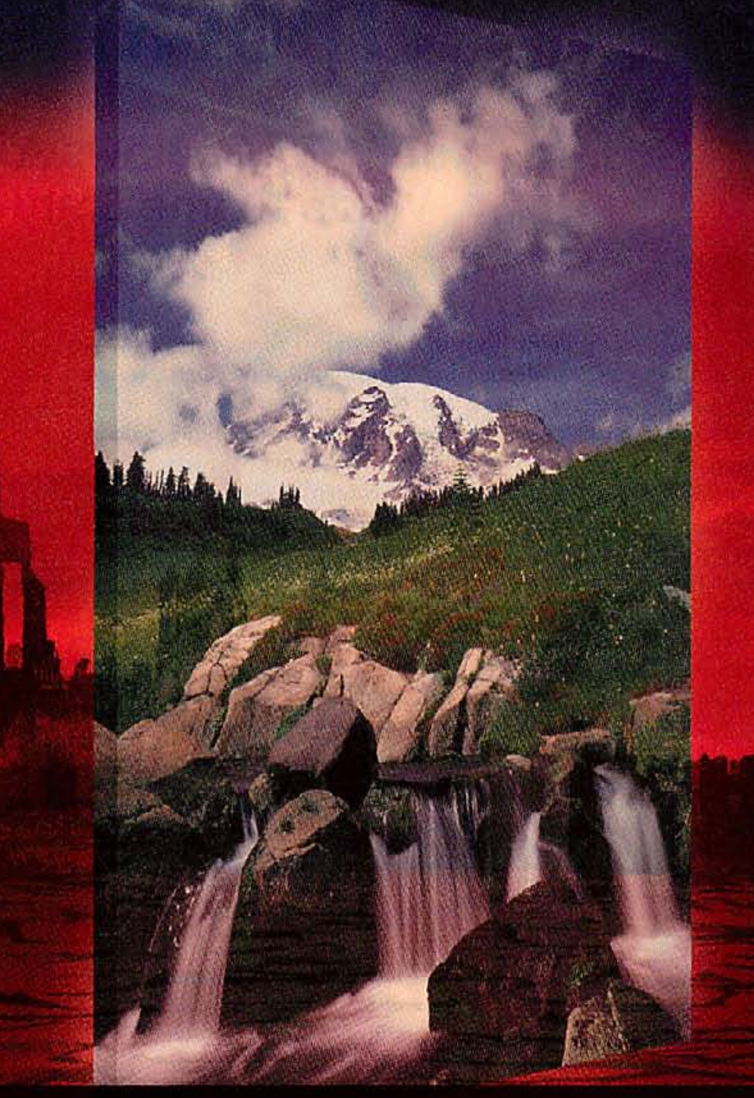
Find, fix, destroy! The offensive catechism holds true in *South Pacific*; as the American, one must seek out and try to close the range. Japanese aircraft have a longer range, although they do suffer from a certain fragility.

Parting Shots

South Pacific is the most detailed wargame yet released by QQP. It is engaging and entertaining, but I find it somewhat light as a serious simulation. Is this a flaw? It isn't if gamers understand that *South Pacific* is not designed to be a serious simulation. So, for those who tire of the satisfying historical challenge of *Pacific War* and want a quick and easy "pick-me-up," *South Pacific* will do. Also, for the Alan Emrich-types, the inclusion of a modem option will insure a presence on the hard drive for a substantial period.

Will the novice gamer be entertained? I am not sure if *Battles Of The South Pacific* will attract a novice audience, but assuming it does, I'm unsure if the neophyte wargamer will have the endurance to delve into the intricacies of the simulation. CGW

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Pacific Theater Of Operations

Koei's *P.T.O.* Blows A Hole In Video Game Stereotype

by H.E. Dille

If asked to describe a home video game, most players' descriptions would include words like "graphics" and "action." In most cases, they would be on the mark. The vast majority of video games on the market are targeted at young adult males, 7-16 years old. Granted, there are crossover titles like *Mario Brothers* and *Sonic the Hedgehog* that hold broader appeal, but these also remain faithful to the core audience. Additionally, it is important to recognize that there are some adults that waited for "Mortal Monday" (i.e., the release day of **Acclaim**'s *Mortal Kombat)*, with equal anticipation as their children.



As a rule, older gamers tend to avoid the dedicated video game consoles. As computer gamers, however, their enthusiasm for the hobby can be just as rabid as their younger counterparts. These, with few exceptions, have been the traditional dividing lines of electronic gaming. Because *CGW* has always maintained a clear editorial focus toward the latter group of gamers, we have rarely crossed that line.

P.T.O., **Koei**'s newest release for the Sega Genesis, crosses the line on its own, appealing directly to the core group of strategy wargamers who normally do not play video games. It is a grand sweeping portrayal of the WWII Pacific conflict. Players may enter at any point from the breakdown of negotiations to the final battles surrounding the Japanese mainland, but the game is in no way constrained by the historical timeline. The attacks on Pearl Harbor, Wake and Midway need not occur unless chosen as the initial objectives. Because of this, the game has a lot of replay value.

The War Room

Initially, the player selects either the campaign option or one of the historical scenarios. Among the included scenarios are Pearl Harbor, Coral Sea, Midway, The Solomons, Battles in the South Pacific, Marianas, Philippines and the Okinawa Offensive. Each scenario has multiple victory conditions and, if the player succeeds in fulfilling one or more of them, they are given the option of continuing from that point forward in a standard campaign game.

Prior to putting to sea, there are several other matters to attend to as well. First, one must determine the ratings of the leaders for the side chosen. None of the actual historical figures are portrayed out of respect for the surviving families (remember, Koei is a wholly owned Japanese company), so a random number generator is provided for these statistics. One hundred and two points are spread among four ratings: Sea Command, Air Command, General War fighting and Bravery. The player can continue to roll the numbers until they generate a combination they like. The first two skills act as modifiers in subsequent engagements. War fighting ability determines how a character's battle plans and other suggestions are accepted at military conferences. Bravery determines whether or not a leader will cut and run when things are not going well in a battle. Finally, historical purists are allowed to edit the names of the leaders to reflect the actual participants if desired.



A starting difficulty level must also be determined, from 0-10. This does not affect the skill of the AI opponent, simply the amount of resource points one has for the performance of certain functions. To explain, the player is given a budget commensurate with the selected level of difficulty. At the zero setting, funding is very generous. One has adequate fuel reserves and materials as well as a good budget to allocate to research and development or other activities. R & D monies can go toward the development of better steel, engines, electronics, etc., even to Jet and Rocket research if desired. At the highest setting, the player has only those resources of fuel, materials and industry that the government provides, with no room for discretionary spending.

P.T.O.



TITLE:	P.T.O.
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	Sega Genesis (SNES also available)
PROTECTION:	None
# OF PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Koei Corp. Burlingame, CA (415) 348-0500

The Battle Plan

As the game proper begins, a military conference will occur to determine the initial strategy. The Army will have three plans, any of which may be selected, or the player can propose one of his own via the character selected to attend the conference. This proposal will only be agreed to by the Army if the leader has a high rating in War fighting, 55 or above as a minimum. All plans contain three objectives, either offensive or defensive. As an example, a good initial plan for the Allied player might be to defend Hawaii and Port Moresby while attacking the Marshall Islands.

Once a plan is adopted, the next step is to arrange the battle fleets and assign leaders to command them. The default ship groupings are not the best arrangement, so the player should modify them from the beginning. Fleet #1 for the Allies, for example, consists of the entire contents of Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor. It is not a good idea to send these capital ships off on their own with only scouts as indigenous air support. As such, one can use the Arrange command to split these assets and their cruiser escorts into battle groups centered on the three aircraft carriers. Further, one can augment the new groups with full transports and freighters if they will be assigned an offensive objective.



The player may have up to 16 fleets at any time, but they only control the first Fleet directly. Other fleets are given one of four objectives when they leave port: Attack an enemy fleet, Attack an enemy base, Gather Intelligence at a specified location or Make a Port Call at another friendly base. Enroute to these objectives, the Fleet Commander will scout for the enemy and, if encountered, may engage targets of opportunity. The aggressiveness with which these engagements are prosecuted is a function of the leader ratings. These battles can be watched passively or, if the player desires, only their results displayed.

The importance of these chance encounters should not be underestimated. Several times in the course of a given campaign game, enemy invasion forces were stumbled upon in advance of their objectives and dealt a decisive blow by the AI controlled Fleets. Being in the right place at the right time has its advantages, even when it occurs through blind luck.



Command at Sea

The First Fleet should be given whichever objective the player feels is the most critical in the battle plan. As Commander of that fleet, the player can input orders every four hours. During these phases, it is also possible to change the missions of other fleets. The possible orders include: conduct warship drills, conduct gun or air attacks, send out search planes, make course and speed changes, rocket attacks, amphibious landings, aviation drills, even stage banquets to improve crew morale.

Training is always beneficial, but it is time consuming. Morale is critical, and the savvy Commander would do well to listen to his



advisor on the state of crew preparedness. Fuel conservation is extremely critical, so the wise Commander shouldn't race all over the Pacific at top speed, or he may have to bring another force to refuel the stranded one. Finally, scout planes should be sent out twice a day, at 0800 and 1600.

Another military conference can be scheduled when the First Fleet returns to home port. Provided the mission was successful, morale will rise, more recruits and ships will be available, and subsequent proposals will be more readily accepted. If one is unsuccessful, dismissal from command is possible. Other types of military conferences can be held whenever in home port as well, covering subjects like arms production, propaganda, special forces ops, technology and armament requests, diplomacy and alliances, as well as the establishment of Base policies and quotas.

Parting Shots

The actual battle sequences are less appealing than the strategic aspects of the game, but players who don't want to watch them do have the option of toggling them off. The only other major grumble is that the manual is inadequate. Although all the menu options are touched upon, many of the critical functions are not discussed in sufficient detail that the player finds the right button combinations to use from the outset. As such, it takes a while to master the interface.

On the positive side, *P.T.O.* is an ambitious design for a 16-bit machine. Players who elect the campaign option are in for a solid 200-300 hours of play time—more than can be had from any other comparatively priced cartridge. Further, no two campaigns play the same, so the actual play value extends beyond these figures to the limit of the player's interest. As stated earlier, this product blurs the traditional distinction between video game and computer programs. It is a welcome loss of vision however, and one will willingly go blind to the stereotypes if *P.T.O.* establishes a new trend in video gaming. CGW



On The Field Of Combat





Part Two Of A Series On *Warlords II* Strategy

by Robert L. Hayes, Jr.

Last month we covered the characteristics of each unit type in Warlords II. This month we pick up with a discussion of the combat system, and continue on to discuss general strategies and small tricks that may foil an opposing Warlord.

In *Warlords II*, combat is fought between groups of units called "stacks." Each stack consists of one to eight units, and only one stack can reside in a map space at one time. Cities cover four map spaces and so can hold up to four stacks. Only one stack can attack at a time, meaning that it is possible to have to fight as many as 32 enemy units simultaneously when besieging a well-defended city.



Units have a base combat factor ranging from one to nine. Additionally, most unit types have special bonuses that they either receive themselves under certain circumstances or that they confer to units in the same stack. Dragons, for example, confer a two-point strength bonus to all units stacked with them, while Spiders receive a two-point strength bonus themselves while in cities. There are five basic classes of bonuses. Intrinsic bonuses are those bonuses a unit receives itself in certain circumstances, like Spiders in cities. Hero bonuses are the bonuses that Heroes confer on all units stacked with them. City bonuses are the one- or two-point bonuses that units receive for being in a city or for being entrenched. Stack bonuses are the bonuses conferred to a stack by certain non-supernatural units, i.e. Pegasi and Unicorns. Supernatural bonuses are the one- or two-point bonuses conferred to a stack by Dragons, Undead, Demons, Devils, Archons, Worms, Elementals and Wizards. The maximum bonus that a stack can receive is +5; i.e., even if your Hero has a Hero bonus of +10, the stack with him or her will receive only a +5 bonus. The highest attainable net unit strength is 14.

However, there are exceptions to the +5 bonus limitation. Specifically, intrinsic and city bonuses apply regardless of other bonus levels. Thus, a heavy cavalry unit (strength 4) in open ground (intrinsic +2 bonus) stacked with a +5 Hero would have a total effective strength of 11, not 9. Intrinsic and city bonuses do not appear in the View Stack menu option. The highest attainable strength for any unit is still 14, however.

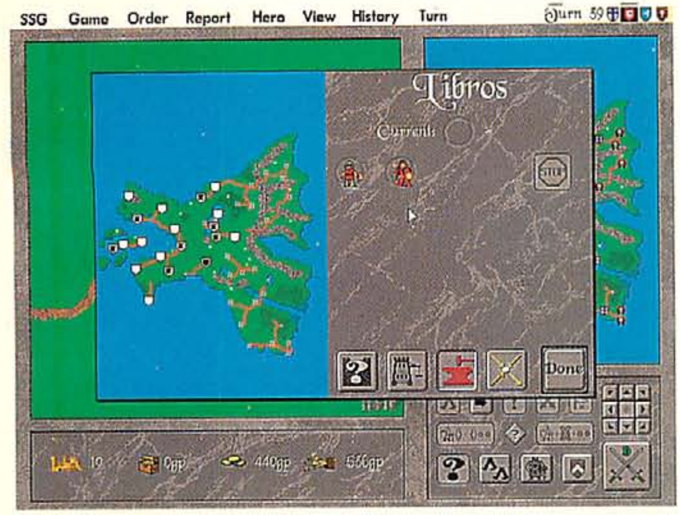
Bonuses are not duplicated; a stack with two Dragons does not receive a +4 bonus.

Odds And Ends

Tables 1 and 2 detail the percentage chance of winning a combat between two units. Table 1 gives the percentages for the normal combat system, while Table 2 provides the same data for the intense combat system. The intense combat system reduces the advantage that high-powered units have over weak units somewhat, but does not change anything else. All examples in this article will assume the normal combat system is in use. Example: a Griffin is attacking a heavy infantry unit in a city (defense 2). The Griffin has a net strength of 7, the infantry a net strength of 5. This gives the Griffin a 69.2% chance of winning the combat.

The nature of the combat system in *Warlords II* is such that it is very, very difficult to calculate the odds in any combat where both sides have multiple units. In a situation where there is only one unit on one of the sides, the odds can be calculated exactly, however. In a straight one-on-one combat, the table contains the proper odds. In a many-on-one combat, to calculate the odds is slightly more complicated, as the calculation has to be done





using a small part of the mathematical field of combinatorics. Let us assume that we have one powerful unit (a Dragon, net strength 11) attacking a stack of eight enemy light infantry units defending a city (net strength 4 apiece). The Dragon has a 95.3% chance of winning each individual combat, but there are eight smaller battles to be fought; any one of them can be lost. The chance that the Dragon will win is expressed by the formula Chance = (X[1] * X[2] ... * X[n]) where X[ ] is the percentage chance of each unit versus the Dragon (4.7% in this case). In our example, this works out to a total chance of 67.8% to win all eight battles, and thus the combat. To determine the odds of the side with the multiple units winning, simply invert the original probability; the infantry has a 32.2% chance of defeating the Dragon. As you can see from this example, hordes of weak units have a fair chance at defeating small groups of powerful units, even though their odds in individual combats are terrible.

It is possible, but extremely complicated, to calculate the odds for many-on-many combats. The only way to get a rough estimate of the chance of winning is to use the combat advisor built into the game. The combat advisor within *Warlords II* is, in general, a good guide to the rough odds between two stacks. However, it should not be trusted when a large number of weak units are attacking one powerful unit (or vice-versa).

The Grand Strategic View

Warlords II is such a flexible game that it is difficult to make any hard-and-fast pronouncements about what constitutes a good strategy. However, there are some guidelines that can be followed.

The most important aspect of the game is proper resource allocation. If you are assaulting enemy cities with cavalry and engaging enemy stacks in the field with Spiders and Griffins, then you are wasting those units. Units are made for a purpose in the *Warlords II* universe, and the prudent warlord will make use of each unit for the tasks for which it is best suited.

The nature of the combat system makes use of combined arms an excellent strategy. Stacks which mix their bonus types liberally will get the most out of each possible bonus; a stack comprised of a Dragon, a Unicorn, a Pegasus, a Wizard, and cannon fodder troops will do much better than the equivalent units acting alone or in homogenous groups.

Be frugal in your use of vectored production. When the enemy takes a city that was a production destination, that production is delayed as the units are sent "back through the pipe." Worse still, your vectoring cities shut off all future production until you reactivate them by hand; if you forget to do so, this can be a disaster. In general, do not vector to or from the front lines. Vector to strategically located cities somewhat behind the fighting, remembering to update your vectoring as the front moves. I find it is easier to allocate forces if I set up my vectoring such that only one unit type is vectored to a given city.

The computer opponents will bypass heavily-defended cities on your fronts and head for the interior of your country if you allow them; since there are no supply considerations in *Warlords II* it does no good to "cut them off" from their own country. If you can do it without stripping your defenses, destroy such invading armies outside of your cities if they seem to be avoiding pitched battles at your gates. Consider maintaining a strike force of heavy and light cavalry, backed up with Unicorns and Pegasi for bonus purposes, in the center of your empire; this allows you to smash any invading army quickly, at the cost of keeping those troops permanently in reserve and away from the front lines.

Speaking of front lines, don't be married to them. If a good enemy city is left undefended deep in enemy territory, take it. If the attacking army is strong enough to provide a good defense of the new acquisition, consider vectoring in powerful units and operating a guerilla campaign in the heart of your opponent's country.

In the mid-game, it is possible to fight only one enemy at a time. Try and do so as much as possible. The best way to forestall enemy declarations of war on your country is to maintain high defense levels; keep a lot of units in your cities, and the other players will



be reluctant to attack you. Once you reach 3/4 of the winning number of cities, however, all bets are off—the computer players will attack you en masse.

In the beginning of the game, neither ignore ruins nor exclusively seek them out. Try to explore those ruins that are conveniently located along your path of conquest. Let later Heroes trudge through the wilderness to pick up those hard-to-reach ruins. Flying Heroes with a large bat escort can quickly reach those remote ruins where your initial Hero would still be trekking through the woods.

Terrain is highly important; if major terrain features are part of your game map, then make sure to manufacture a few scouts (or other movement-facilitating units) in the appropriate locations. String your scouts out along the path you are likely to travel; that



way major unit convoys will not be delayed because their scout runs out of movement points.

Always assassinate enemy Heroes, especially if you know it is the only Hero they have and they are low on gold. Don't conduct a sneak attack for this, unless you have reason to suspect the Hero has some truly incredible magic items and has no escort.

If diplomacy is turned on, start the game as a very honorable and decent person. Allow your moral character to deteriorate as the game goes on. Start as Jimmy Carter, spend the middle game as George Bush, and the end game as Richard Nixon. Once you reach that magic 75% point, start slaughtering indiscriminately without regard for petty things like alliance status; everybody is about to declare war on you anyway. If, however, your position is not strong despite your commanding lead, consider playing nice for a while longer; the computer players tend to attack you with about as much vigor as you are attacking them. Don't sack their cities, and they might leave you alone long enough for you to garotte them in their sleep.

Play with the Fight Order menu option if you like; in some games it can be worthwhile to make some changes. In many games I end up with an army running heavily to Pegasi and Griffins; in such cases, I usually switch those two unit types so that my Pegasi don't get chewed up by city defenders. It really depends on what you are doing and what your army's composition is.

If a unit uses less than its maximum movement points, it "saves" one or two points. If you leave one point, one point carries over; leave more than one point and you get two points.

The automatic pathfinder is good, but has many gaps and weaknesses in it; don't use it for long distances. Be particularly careful when assigning naval paths, as the computer will often have your units move on land to a port nearer their final goal rather than sailing (at a much higher rate of speed) the long way. Use the tentative path assignment feature copiously; this lets you check the computer's paths for errors, and if any are egregious enough you can simply move the units the hard way.

Dirty Tricks

This one only works if you have hidden stacks (i.e., you can only see the "top" unit in each stack). Short of attacking them, your enemies can see only how big each stack is and what the highest-powered unit in it is. The unit displayed is the unit with the highest combat number in the Fight Order menu. When the computer players "look" at your forces, they assume that all the units in a stack are the same as the top unit. So, build seven light infantry and one Dragon. The other players now think you have the monster stack of all time, and give you wide berth. (You will see them doing it on occasion; a stack will approach one of your cities, hesitate for a moment, then head off in an entirely different direction after deciding that you are too strong.) This does not work if the combat advisor is turned on, however; the computer players do use that option, and it will tell them that your stack is not nearly as tough as it looks.

With the combat advisor turned off, you can reverse this trick and have a wonderful time. Build a stack of seven Dragons (or whatever your ideal slaughtering stack looks like) with one light infantry unit. Go into the Fight Order menu and switch the positions of light infantry and Dragons. The stack now appears to be eight light infantry. The computer player sends its Hero leading a few heavy cavalry into this stack, expecting to run over you; you cackle with unholy glee as your Dragons convert him to blackened Herofish. Great fun!

If you don't have time to go after ruins, consider spoiling the other players' fun. Have one city do nothing but build scouts or bats. Send one out to each of the ruins on the map. You can probably cover a lot of them before hostile Heroes reach them. The computer player then has to declare war on you in order to get at the ruins. Generally he won't unless he was planning to anyway. What can be truly beautiful is that the computer sometimes assumes your unit must be in transit somewhere

Table 1

Chance of Attacker Winning A Given Combat, Die Size 16 (Normal Combat)

	Defender													
Attacker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	50.0	23.9	12.8	7.4	4.5	2.8	1.8	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0
2	76.1	50.0	32.7	21.6	14.4	9.7	6.5	4.3	2.8	1.8	1.1	0.6	0.3	0.1
3	87.2	67.3	50.0	36.5	26.4	18.9	13.3	9.2	6.2	4.1	2.5	1.5	0.7	0.3
4	92.6	78.4	63.5	50.0	38.6	29.2	21.6	15.6	11.0	7.4	4.7	2.8	1.5	0.6
5	95.5	85.6	73.6	61.5	50.0	39.7	30.8	23.2	16.9	11.8	7.8	4.7	2.5	1.1
6	97.2	90.3	81.1	70.9	60.3	50.0	40.4	31.6	23.9	17.3	11.8	7.4	4.1	1.8
7	98.2	93.5	86.7	78.4	69.2	59.6	50.0	40.7	31.9	23.9	16.9	11.0	6.2	2.8
8	98.9	95.7	90.8	84.4	76.8	68.4	59.3	50.0	40.7	31.6	23.2	15.6	9.2	4.3
9	99.3	97.2	93.8	89.0	83.1	76.1	68.1	59.3	50.0	40.4	30.8	21.6	13.3	6.5
10	99.6	98.2	95.9	92.6	88.2	82.7	76.1	68.4	59.6	50.0	39.7	29.2	18.9	9.7
11	99.8	98.9	97.5	95.3	92.2	88.2	83.1	76.8	69.2	60.3	50.0	38.6	26.4	14.4
12	99.9	99.4	98.5	97.2	95.3	92.6	89.0	84.4	78.4	70.9	61.5	50.0	36.5	21.6
13	99.9	99.7	99.3	98.5	97.5	95.9	93.8	90.8	86.7	81.1	73.6	63.5	50.0	32.7
14	100.0	99.9	99.7	99.4	98.9	98.2	97.2	95.7	93.5	90.3	85.6	78.4	67.3	50.0

Table 2

Chance of Attacker Winning A Given Combat, Die Size 32 (Intense Combat)

	Defender													
Attacker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	50.0	25.0	14.3	8.9	6.0	4.1	3.0	2.2	1.7	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.5
2	75.0	50.0	34.0	23.9	17.3	12.8	9.7	7.4	5.7	4.5	3.5	2.8	2.2	1.8
3	85.7	66.0	50.0	38.1	29.3	22.8	17.9	14.2	11.3	9.0	7.3	5.9	4.7	3.8
4	91.1	76.1	61.9	50.0	40.4	32.7	26.5	21.6	17.6	14.4	11.8	9.7	7.9	6.5
5	94.1	82.7	70.7	59.6	50.0	41.8	34.9	29.2	24.3	20.3	16.9	14.1	11.7	9.7
6	95.9	87.2	77.2	67.3	58.2	50.0	42.8	36.5	31.1	26.4	22.3	18.9	15.9	13.3
7	97.0	90.3	82.1	73.5	65.1	57.2	50.0	43.5	37.7	32.5	28.0	23.9	20.4	17.3
8	97.8	92.6	85.8	78.4	70.9	63.5	56.5	50.0	44.0	38.6	33.6	29.2	25.2	21.6
9	98.4	94.3	88.7	82.4	75.7	68.9	62.3	56.0	50.0	44.4	39.2	34.4	30.1	26.1
10	98.7	95.5	91.0	85.6	79.7	73.6	67.5	61.5	55.6	50.0	44.7	39.7	35.1	30.8
11	99.0	96.5	92.7	88.2	83.1	77.7	72.1	66.4	60.8	55.3	50.0	44.9	40.1	35.6
12	99.3	97.2	94.2	90.3	85.9	81.1	76.1	70.9	65.6	60.3	55.1	50.0	45.1	40.4
13	99.4	97.8	95.3	92.1	88.3	84.1	79.6	74.8	69.9	64.9	59.9	54.9	50.0	45.2
14	99.5	98.2	96.2	93.5	90.3	86.7	82.7	78.4	73.9	69.2	64.5	59.6	54.8	50.0

and just happened to end up on that ruin space, so it will wait a turn for you to get out of the way. When you don't (your scout has encamped, of course), the computer Hero may sit there for turn after turn, doing nothing. This does not always work, but when it does it is the most profitable use of a scout or bat you will ever see. The same trick can be used on temples.

Once everyone is already furious at you for winning the game, start sacking and razing any newly-captured city that you know you can't hold for more than a turn or two. First sack it, then raze it; this way you'll get all the money (and the maximum anger from your neighbors, so watch it). Use the money thus raised to enhance the production of your cities far from the front.

If a computer player has no cities, his units will do nothing on the one turn that he may get before the end of the turn cycle consigns him to the history books. Thus, if you are about to put the kibosh on your opponent's plans for conquest by grabbing his last city, don't worry about the enormous armies he may have in the field (or besieging your capital)—the stacks will melt away and do you no harm. CGW

Circle Reader Service #86

Roger Keating On Warlords II

A Collection of On-line Notes
Compiled by Alan Emrich

On the various computer networks, such as CompuServe and GEnie, there are many computer game designers who take the time to read the bulletin boards and answer customer's questions about their games. Among them is SSG's Roger Keating, who has been busy answering questions about his latest design, *Warlords II.*

As *Computer Gaming World*'s on-line editor, I get to follow many threads (bulletin board "conversations") about computer games. Since I have an affinity for *Warlords II*, every time I saw Roger Keating post a little nugget on-line, I printed it out and squirrelled it away. With the conclusion of our *Warlords II* strategy article, I thought I would compile his on-line notes for the edification of all Warlords.

Wall's Treat

City wall building is easier in *Warlords II* than it was in the original game. However, Catapult units are the antidote to that. Roger never starts a campaign without them.

Enhance Me!

A nation that is "Enhanced" will have +2 added to the strength of all its units.

The Bonus Situation

Only one of the special/stack bonuses is ever applied to a stack of armies. Thus, even if there were two Great Worms and three Pegasi (or any total of specials greater than one), players still only receive a +1 bonus for the stack. If you're lucky enough to have a dragon, the +2 is added to the stack. To this will be added any Hero bonus for the stack.

Note that stack bonuses are determined once, at the beginning of combat. Thus, if a unit that provided a stack bonus dies in the midst of battle, surviving units in its army will still receive the stack bonus that it provided through the battle's end.

Also note that both the attacker and defender are eligible for the terrain bonus. The terrain bonus is determined solely by the square the *defender* occupies, so if the defender is in the plains, both side's cavalry will receive their combat bonuses.

Who Gives a Flying...?

The flying bonus was changed from the original *Warlords* game so that Giant Bats would not give a +1 bonus to stacks simply because they can fly. Their role is primarily as airborne scouts.

Maintaining Standards

The +1 bonus for each player's standard is ecumenical. It works for any side that possesses it.

Maintaining Armies

The normal maintenance cost for units is 1/2 of their purchase cost, every turn. For units on boats, there is a *minimum* of 4 GP (Gold Pieces) per turn. This is to discourage the formation of huge, standing fleets.

Varying Unit Types

Each army type in a scenario has a standard cost, time and movement allowance. For each city, there is a small chance that these values will be varied. Note that this can make them worse than "average." Army types that a player pays to have a city build, however, always come with the standard values.

Personality Problems

The computer player personalities only give a bit of variation among the different computer players. They were not really designed to reflect "personalities" in the human sense. The factors involved control the number of assault divisions each player has and the likelihood that they will burn and pillage. They also guide a computer player toward certain spending habits. The reason they are there in the first place is so that Roger can experiment with and expand on this area when his next game comes around.

I Am The Greatest

The "I am the Greatest" button does two things in particular. First, it increases the other players' dislike for the human player on the diplomacy index to something equivalent to burning down three cities before the game even begins. Razing any city makes a player unpopular. Roger usually doesn't raze cities until he is either well on the way to victory or so firmly entrenched as the game's "Running Dog" that any further unpopularity would simply not matter.

Second, computer players at war with the human player will tend not to fight amongst themselves.

Keating is not Synonymous with Cheating

The computer doesn't have any more knowledge about a hidden map than a human player. It sends out scouting parties and bats, just like human players do. Temples, cities and ruins are all placed completely randomly, too.

There are no special triggers in the program that help or hinder heroes from joining a player's cause. Having about 1,500 GPs and a little time is all it takes.

Remember, other (computer) players will start in sparsely populated areas, and their heroes will die at temples and then not be replaced for a long time, just like human players' do. There are only two differences in this matter. First, computer players don't complain to SSG about their tough luck. Second, computer players never cheat by saving the game just prior to "the big battle" in case things don't go right for them! Early in the design process, SSG debated about allowing the computer to "cheat" rather than spending the processing time it takes to carry out a computer opponent's searching, but it was decided to let the computer players take their time and do it "fairly."

Alan's Advice

There is a nearly "perfect plan" for winning a game at 100% difficulty. It was devised by Steve Barcia, designer of *Master of Orion* for MicroProse. The heck of it is, it's quite simple.

First, expand out to your equal share of cities (usually around 20, but that may vary with the number of cities and players in the game). Next, build up your defenses (including a strong, defensive reaction force—preferably one with a Hero who has something to speed up his/her stack's movement) and create one sure-fire strike force to attack with.

Attack and conquer an enemy city, then pillage it for the maximum money you can squeeze out of it. After you've gotten all the money, go back to that city and raze it on the same turn. Then go on to the next enemy city and repeat this process.

What will happen is that: A) you'll become incredibly rich and get plenty of heroes and good units to produce back home to continue your wars of aggression; and B) your enemies will go broke and be forced to reduce the size of their armed forces, making your prospects of victory that much better. Play patiently and, with only a modicum of luck, you can win most of the time. CGW




Photos courtesy R.G.M. Studios

It Was the Best of Times, It Was the Worst of Times

Gold-Juno-Sword Wraps Up The V For Victory Series



by Terry Lee Coleman

Ever since *Beachhead* conquered the Apple and Commodore markets a decade ago, amphibious invasion games have enticed gamers. Significant, then, that the first game in the *V For Victory* series would be *Utah Beach*, covering the greatest invasion in all of history—D-Day. When released, *Utah Beach* was a revelation, combining superb graphics with a true "board wargame" feel. While certainly complex, the system was logical, and with persistence, gave the player a rich and rewarding wargame experience.

The problem with any game series is how to stay commercially successful while still being perceived as fresh and innovative. Thus, despite a plethora of awards, *Utah Beach* fell prey to the maniacal pace of ever-upgrading hardware and technology. The basic *V For Victory* engine was tinkered with, and although some graphic and technical improvements ensued, the releases of the next two games, *Velikiye Luki* and *Market Garden*, were infested with a variety of programming bugs. In fact, the situation had deteriorated so badly, that many gamers were checking the on-line services for updated versions, before even purchasing the games!

From a design standpoint, one had to question the subject matter of the games as well. If *Utah Beach* was evocative, then *Velikiye Luki*, covering siege warfare on the Russian Front in the middle of winter, was perilously close to sleepwalking. *Market Garden* could hardly have been said to be boring, but the volatile situation masked many of the game's flaws. In all of the *V For Victory* games there is a tendency for the designers to feel that their games are superior, simply because they are on a computer screen, rather than a game board. Ironically, it is *Market Garden* that shines in this respect, if only because the "fog of war" rules are appropriate for the confusion at Arnhem.

Considering the track record then, *Gold-Juno-Sword (GJS)* is a return to the roots of the *V For Victory* series—the D-Day landings. While the Americans had only Utah Beach to assault, the British and Canadian forces striked Hitler's Fortress Europa from three beaches, hence the name of the operation (and the game). The player eagerly begins *Gold-Juno-Sword*, only to find "hitting the beaches" has already been done prior to the game! According to the designers, the player's role as commander would not give him control over the initial invasion forces, and rather than simply delegate the invasion to the computer, the invasion was simply considered outside the scope of the game. *Gold-Juno-Sword* tries too hard here to be a "simulation" rather than a game. Imagine a book on a military campaign that rigidly stuck to one point of view—certainly it would be dismissed as biased, even boring. Nevertheless, many wargames, *Gold-Juno-Sword* among them, rigidly define what role the gamer must play, often without considering the gamer's "suspension of disbelief," or what effect such an arbitrary decision will have on the entertainment value of the product.



That the game takes such an approach is all the more puzzling given the care with which the manual is put together. Gamers wishing to plunge right in may learn about stacking, naval support, and generally how to fight by using the "quick start" Operations Manual. In fact, the game is playable through the various pull-down menus, and has several nice features, such as being able to click on "victory buttons" to refresh one's memory on who owns which victory point hexes.

After playing the first scenario, Orne Bridge, enough times, the player will want to know why things are happening, which leads him to the Reference Manual. To call the manual a "massive tome" hardly does it justice; it's a walloping 131 pages of explanations of Zones of Control, interdiction, and even rules on how units surrender. Many gamers have praised Three-Sixty and Atomic Games for the thorough rules found throughout the series, and *Gold-Juno-Sword* is certainly complete. For those players who failed to get their logistic nightmare fix, the manual has ten pages of supply rules, then follows with seven more pages of morale and fatigue rules, before the player knows whether his tired, sore and hungry troops will fight or not. Supposedly, by reading all the appropriate material, the players will be so illuminated that enjoyment will automatically ensue.

Part of the lengthy rules is a backlash to the criticism of computer games never telling "the whole story" of the design. Number-crunchers will have a field day (no pun intended) with the terrain and supply charts, and their effects on combat. Nonetheless, there is no single chart for "roll a 6, defender

V For Victory: Gold-Juno-Sword



TITLE:	V For Victory: Gold-Juno-Sword
PRICE:	$59.95
SYSTEM:	IBM, Mac
REQUIREMENTS:	IBM: 386SX or better, 3MB RAM, VESA compatible video card, 5MB hard drive space, mouse; Adlib, SoundBlaster sound cards supported; math co-processor supported Mac: Mac+ or better, 2MB RAM for 256-color, 3MB under System 7
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Eric Young, Keith Zabalaoui, Larry Merkel, Ed Rains
PUBLISHER:	Three-Sixty Campbell, CA (800) 653-1360

eliminated" or whatever, and with no visible Combat Results Table, the player is left with no framework for all those pretty numbers. Of course, one can always let the computer "Staff Assistant (tm)" take care of everything and just watch...

Perhaps while the computer is having all the fun fighting the battles, the erstwhile general can learn to be a meteorologist. Clear, storms, and three varieties of overcast, allow the player to either flaunt his air superiority, or frantically pray for rain (if playing the Germans). Not only can the player manipulate the weather ahistorically, but he may even control the temperature, which somewhat symbolically, has absolutely no effect on the game.

What the player does get to do is fight over the infamous "bocage" terrain, rendered in SVGA graphics far more subtle than the old *Utah Beach.* The tutorials are not quite as painless as in, say, *Clash of Steel,* but they serve well enough to teach the system. Allied forces are the better for the novice to begin with, if only because most wargamers are better on attack than defense. Sad to say, but even the most defensive-minded will dislike playing the Germans, as their situation is virtually hopeless. In the face of overwhelming Allied airpower, the German is beset with supply hassles, his retreats are interdicted, and his movement is restricted. Worse, the AI is incapable of using artillery properly or of coordinating assaults, even when obvious gaps are left to be exploited. Regrouping or using replacements also seems beyond the AI's meager abilities.

Should the player feel masochistic enough to take the German side, the first thing to do is to give the Germans some airpower, or to make the weather ahistorically bad. Even with adjustments, the deck is stacked so thoroughly against the Germans, that the AI on the Allied side almost seems competent! By trying so hard to focus the player on a particular role, the designers lost their own perspective. If the point is that the Allied win was inevitable once forces were ashore, why play the game? Especially with two human players, the individual scenarios are agonizing for the German against any decent Allied player. Should the players want to learn about the campaign, a book by Max Hastings, for instance, takes far less time to read than the full campaign of *Gold-Juno-Sword* does to play to completion.

The excellent manual, copious player aids, good interface, and sumptuous SVGA graphics should all combine to give the true wargamer a feast. Why then are we left so empty? Because a recipe is not merely a combination of a variety of ingredients—the chef's imagination must combine the items so that the dish emerges with its own unique flavor and identity. Three-Sixty, by publishing the *V For Victory* games, took a bold step. Yet after four games, *Gold-Juno-Sword* is hardly the flagship product the buying public has a right to expect. Although promised, no modem-to-modem gaming is available, and while earlier games such as *Velikiye Luki* and *Market Garden* are compatible with the new game, transfer of saved-game files is not. Similar to such disappointments as *Theatre of War* and *Patriot, Gold-Juno-Sword* succeeds only on a technological level, bereft of soul. Three-Sixty's legacy is akin to a line of books without an editor, its lack of control and support setting its buying public adrift. Nowhere was



this made more plain then when **Atomic Games,** the design team behind *V For Victory,* announced recently that *Gold-Juno-Sword* would be its last game in the series, and that Atomic would do similar games with **Avalon Hill.** Perhaps *Harpoon II* or Jim Dunnigan's *Victory At Sea* can turn things around, but Three-Sixty's reputation in the hobby has suffered a major blow, which could only have been helped if quality control had been present earlier in the *V For Victory* series.

For Atomic Games, their knowledge and productivity will be more than matched by a company that has produced wargames for over three decades. Avalon Hill has never had success with computer games, however, and Atomic will have to provide innovative and relatively bug-free products from the first in order to win over a skeptical public. The true legacy of *Gold-Juno-Sword* and its brethren may be that one of the best technical teams in the computer wargame genre teamed up with the wargame company with, arguably, the greatest marketing resources and savvy. Just imagine what this combination could do with *Russian Campaign* or *Panzer Leader*...certainly, something just as technically dazzling as *Gold-Juno-Sword,* and undoubtedly more enjoyable. **CGW**



Illustration ©Roger MacGowan

M.ore in Russia

Gary Grigsby's *War in Russia*

by M. Evan Brooks

Any aficionado of World War II gaming who likes a horde of tanks and a maximum of troops ends up heading to the East. *Gary Grigsby's War In Russia (WIR)* is the designer's third trip in that direction, his latest rendition of the epic struggle between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It is not to be confused with the *CGW* Hall of Fame's *War In Russia*, released for 8-bit machines in 1984, but bears closer resemblance to his 16-bit effort, released in 1990 as *Second Front*. Many, thinking through red, white and blue tinted lenses, were confused about the latter title, as we Yanks think of the "second front" as the Allied landings in Western Europe. To allay confusion, the latest game has reverted to a variant of the 8-bit title.

Docs, Heal Thyself!

The documentation is standard for SSI—guaranteed to scare off the novice and confuse the veteran. The necessary information is there, it's just that the prose's elegance makes tax law appear interesting. For the truly math-inspired, the combat formulas are included. I characterized the documentation of *Second Front* as "abysmal"; my opinion stands for *WIR*. If one is familiar with *Second Front*, there should be few problems of interpretation, but pity the user who is new to the system.

Luckily, a tutorial allows the user to gain a basic familiarity with the simulation. Also, a relatively detailed Order of Battle has been included, along with a map. It is a relief to see SSI again including the map in the documentation; it makes strategic planning much easier for the user.

The map is composed of hexes (representing 20 miles of terrain), with each turn representing a single week. Army units are represented at the corps level, with each corps consisting of up to eight divisions.

There are five basic scenarios offered: Campaign 41 (June 1941-July 1945; the entire war!); Campaign 42 (June 1942-July 1945); Typhoon (September 1941-March 1942; the assault on Moscow); Case Blue (June 1942-April 1943; the Battles of Stalingrad); Campaign '43 (July 1943-July 1945; commencing with the Battle of Kursk). The scenarios cover the gamut of World War II on the Eastern Front, but the box art notes that there are four campaigns, eight historical and one hypothetical scenario. This hyperbole is muted by the inclusion of a scenario editor. The grognard will be ecstatic at the possibility of creating his own scenarios. However, note that the effort and time necessary to produce a viable scenario is formidable.

There are four points concerning the documentation that must be addressed: a) a bridge bomb option mentioned in the documentation has been deleted; b) the tactical hints were produced before the final version, thereby being more generic than usual; c) in blizzard turns, Soviet tank armies may plot into three enemy hexes (not two, as stated); d) shorter scenarios do not end when the objective cities are captured. One must play the scenario to a conclusion (and have the captured cities in at least supply level 5).

Victory conditions are not stated in the documentation, but rather are listed in the scenario conditions (on-disk). Generally, occupation of key cities are the cornerstones of victory. Since the enemy forces will defend such cities to the maximum, one must be prepared to engage in massive battles around them.

Finally, Mr. Grigsby has continued to support his products on GEnie's Games RoundTable (page 805). A dedicated group of gamers will be glad to assist novices, and even the battle-hardened veteran can find much to contemplate and discuss in the modem world. Hopefully, some of these veterans will upload their scenarios for use by other gamers. But for the gamer confused by the documentation, GEnie is a superb place to get help.

I Came, I Saw, I Listened

The graphics are functional and sound effects are limited, but detailed wargames on an operational/strategic level need little in the way of sound. Perhaps the overall appearance of the simulation may best be summed up as akin to *Second Front* and *Western Front*, with the interface being more like *Pacific War*.

Visually, an attractive graphic of the units appears during combat displaying the number of tanks, artillery pieces, troops, etc. The actual battle report may be rendered in intricate detail or with quicker accounting; the former illustrates the actual ebb and flow of the battlefield, but it takes more time.

Weather remains consistent: if it is snowing



in Leningrad, it is snowing in Sebastopol. As I noted in my review of *Second Front* (*CGW* #72, June 1990), this is unrealistic. Chris Crawford's *Eastern Front* (1979) had shown a pattern of graduated weather change. Couldn't this occur in *WIR*? This is not only a graphic weakness, but one of historical accuracy.

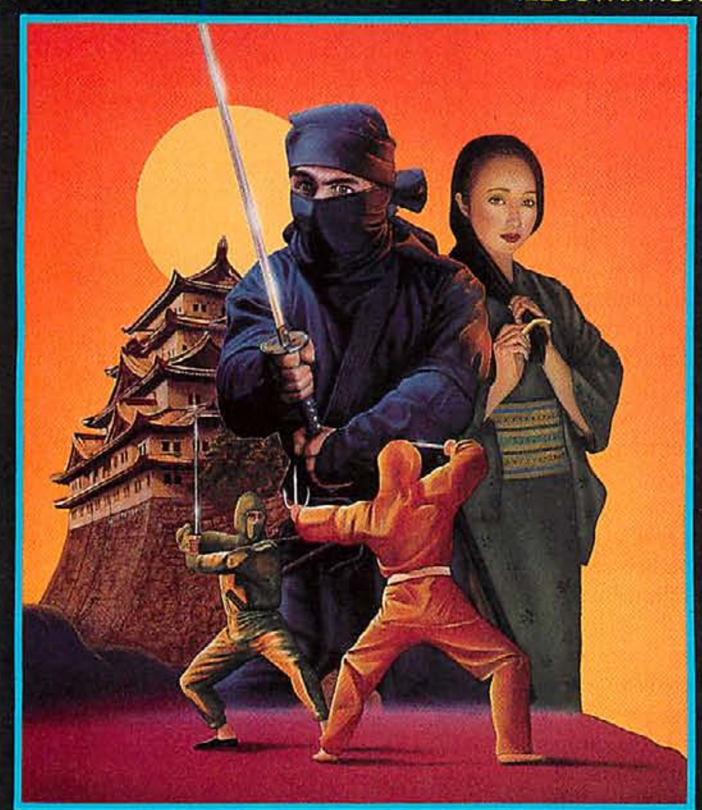
Panzer Pushing

The game mechanics are mouse and keyboard-driven. While *Second Front* did not have a mouse option, *WIR* clearly does. Mr.

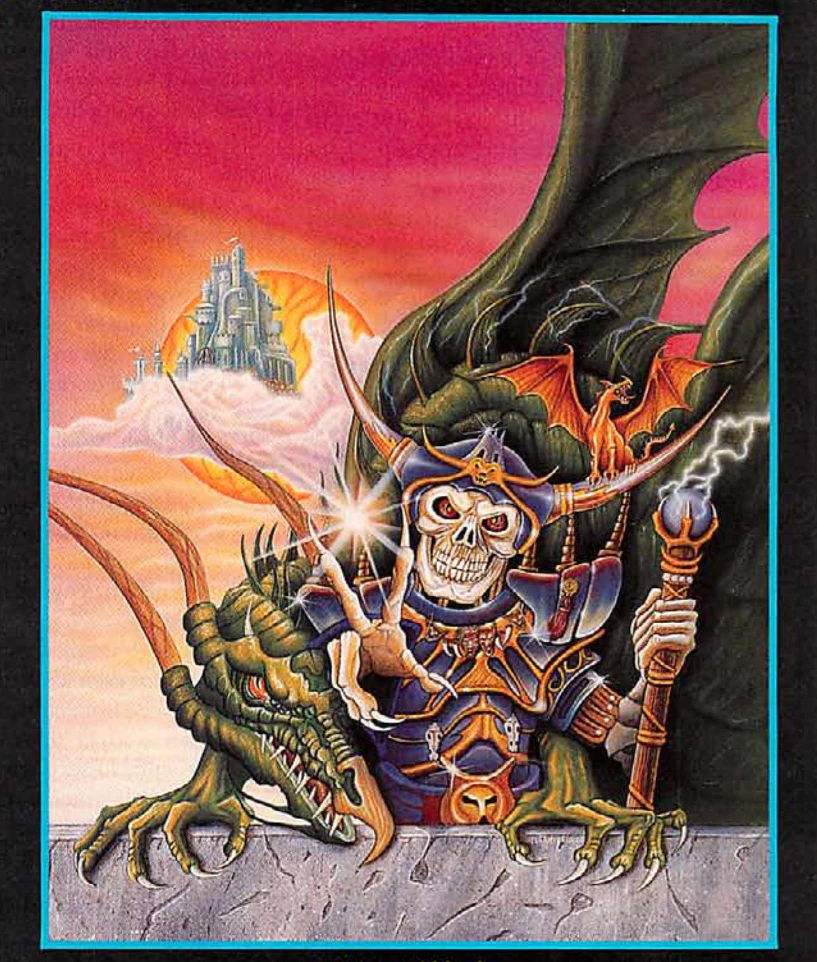
Gary Grigsby's War In Russia



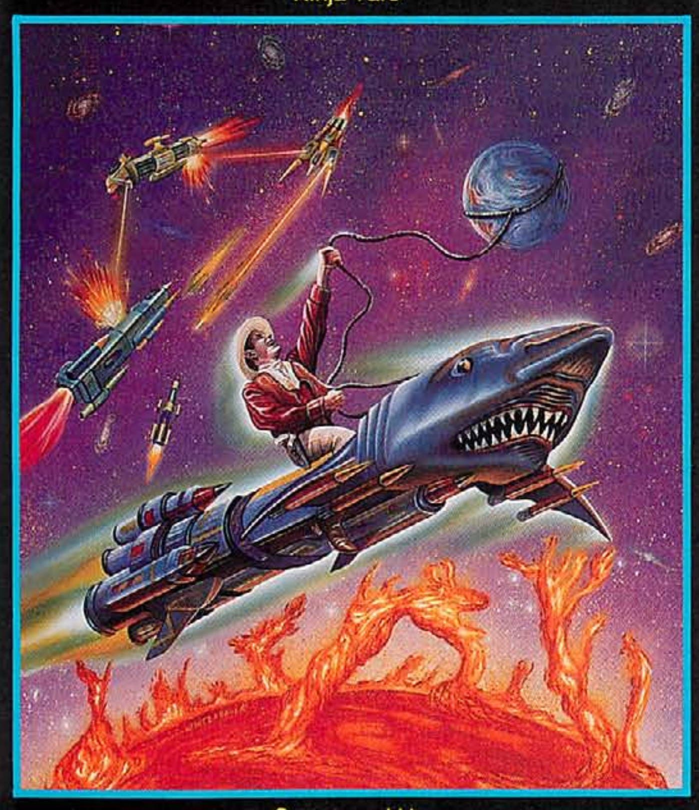
TITLE:	Gary Grigsby's War In Russia
PRICE:	$79.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, VGA/EGA graphics, 1.9MB hard drive space; SoundBlaster and SB Pro sound cards supported
# PLAYERS:	0-2
PROTECTION:	Documentation look up
DESIGNER:	Gary Grigsby
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations, Inc. Alameda, CA (408) 737-4800



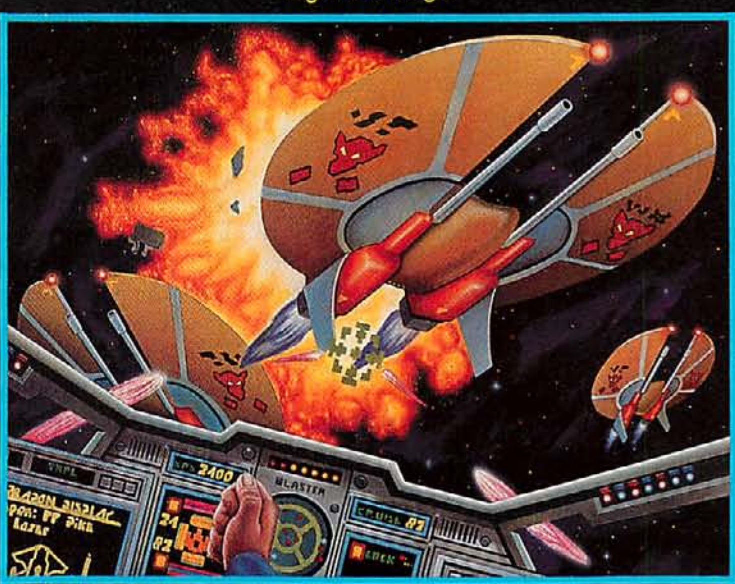
Ninja Taro



Might and Magic



Spaceward Ho



Wing Commander

Grigsby still recommends the use of a keyboard to input plotting commands, but that is a matter of personal preference.

There are some flaws in the mechanics; for example, while hidden units are *de rigeur*, the computer's units become visible during its combat portion, undermining much of the surprise element.

But what is new? Aside from the mouse implementation and a scenario editor, strategic and march modes have been decreased to a more realistic level. This allows a better chance to secure large envelopments and to pocket enemy formations. Special supply allows the user to combat supply-specific units for critical offensive or defensive missions. Operation points (a legacy from *Pacific War*) encourage better discipline in strategic planning; the player should insure that his headquarters move last as this will maximize the use of such *OPs*. The German player should remember that, initially, *blitzkrieg* supply will more than serve his needs, but once the battlefield becomes somewhat stabilized, normal supply only achieves a 70 percent resupply rate and special supply becomes mandatory to maximize assaults.

The production rules have become more detailed, with factories being more restrictive in retooling. A tank factory can more easily upgrade to a newer tank than switch over to aircraft. In fact, the production can become a game in itself. However, it requires much painstaking attention to detail, and the more casual user would be well-advised to allow the computer to act as one's Albert Speer.

In fact, a player can allow the computer to handle virtually any portion of the program. Do you just want to handle the assault on Moscow? No problem, change the other Army Groups to computer control. Of course, wargamers are detail people and it is the rare wargamer who can resist handling everything from national strategy to platoon placement. Luckily, one cannot get down to that detail… *yet.*

The leadership rules have remained unchanged. One can appoint the field leaders and relieve them on-the-spot. Occasionally,



poor performance will lead to an automatic "firing," or illness can even intervene to alter the command structure. A proper use of good commanders (and a potential fireman *a la* Zhukov or Manstein) is required for optimization of force application.

There are certain options I would have liked to see:

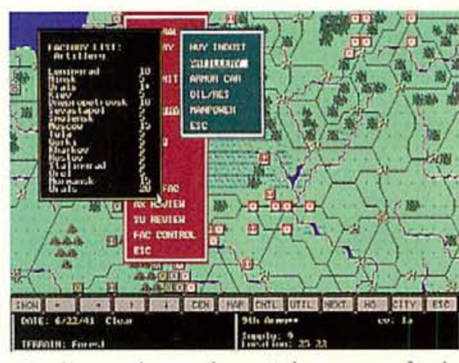
- The use of separate combat routines for each side might have given a better feel;
- The 8-bit version of *WIR* mandated that the player use engineer units to rebuild the captured rail net. This permitted one to concentrate his assets and determine where the *Schwerpunkt* would fall. While this can telegraph one's intentions to the enemy, it also could allow the user to potentially break out on a narrower frontage. Currently, railroad utilization becomes automatic after a delay of four to five weeks;
- Although detailed combat losses are given for each week, there is no war total. Aside from copying the weekly losses to paper, one cannot determine the actual losses during the course of the war. It would not have been difficult to add a running total option—available at any time the user chooses.

All This and the JSII

Game play is very reminiscent of *Second Front*—with both its strengths and weaknesses. The major building block of combat is the corps, with three to eight divisions being assigned. One may tailor his forces to yield the appropriate mix.

Partisan operations have been made more important, and if a German player ignores the rear, the partisans can well raise havoc with his supply. Even without partisans, the German will face a dearth of supply. Often, only airlift can preserve combat units in the front lines. Use such assets carefully, since there is never enough to satisfy the need.

Generally, a broad-based invasion is the key to success. Separate drives for Leningrad, Moscow and the South should be maintained. Of course, Moscow is the prize—its capture will devastate the Soviet since it is the nexus of the road net. Yet, the initial *Blitzkreig* is not rapid enough. Historically, Minsk fell in the first week of the campaign. It is simply not possible here; like *Second Front*, the German military machine often seems to be running at the same speed—historically slower in the first weeks but faster in the later months. While it evens out in the end, it does not yield an accurate picture of the ebb and flow of the Russian Campaign.



Bad weather, the nightmare of the *Wehrmacht*, has been made even more deadly. There is little that the German player can do to avoid the counteroffensive of General Winter. Be aware that no matter how rosy the picture in August, an early frost (or blizzard) will change the situation literally overnight. Despite digging in or fortifications, nothing can maintain the line. While some users contend that the Germans could have more efficiently planned for the ensuing winter and emerged relatively unscathed, I do not believe that the German logistical chain could have offset the effects of the weather. The Axis logistics were heavily dependent on horsepower—literally (over 75% of its transport ability came from horses, and not trucks). This, coupled with the inability of the German logisticians to sustain their troops over the breadth of Europe, buttress the designer's treatment of winter. Be aware of the weakness, and be adaptable. Trading space for time, when done in a logical and coherent manner, is the key to success.

Aircraft still seem to be too energetic. Air battles occur on a regular basis, making the Battle of Britain appear to be a skirmish. However, a matter of more concern is that the aircraft of both sides often appear to possess all-weather capability, and flying both combat missions and resupply in blizzard conditions is routine.

Red Flag Raising

War In Russia is not a generational descendant of *Second Front*, it is more of a younger brother. A workmanlike simulation, *WIR* should be acquired by any *grognard* who does not have *Second Front*. However, for those already possessing the earlier product, does mouse implementation and a scenario editor justify its purchase? That will remain an individual decision. My personal feeling is that the program has been released too soon after *Second Front*, and since there are no financial discounts akin to MicroProse's *Railroad Tycoon Deluxe* vis-a-vis *Railroad Tycoon*, well…

CGW

Opponents Wanted

Those wishing to place their own (free) ads need only send us a postcard (or use the *Notes* section of the RID card), letter, FAX [714-283-3444] or E-Mail (Prodigy [EXPT40B], CompuServe [76703,622], The Sierra Network at Box 1048, GEnie and America On-Line [CGW]). Generally, we run them only once, so send another each time if you want to keep your name listed! The ads themselves should serve as reasonable examples as to how to write your own. However,

• Include a brief description of the types of opponents and games you are interested in playing. Games being played other than direct by modem *can* be listed (trading save game disks or even face-to-face).

• At least one (possibly more) telephone number(s) must be included. *Do not forget the area code* and mention whether the number is a Home, Work or Modem number.

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Novalink (formerly Digital Dreams) **Network:** (800) 274-2814

GEnie: (800) 638-9636

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Seeking local "live ones" for *Air Warrior*. Call Don at H-(407) 482-0094 in Boca Raton, FL between 4pm -7:30pm local time.

Seeking pilots to go head-to-head in *Falcon 3.01* and/or *F-15 SEIII*. I'm in the San Francisco area and can be reached at H-(415) 468-2021 or through my BBS at (415) 468-6713. Ask for John Custer.

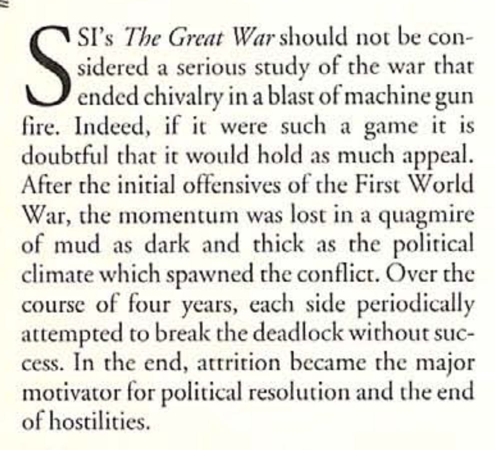
Looking for local opponent for playing games of *Conquered Kingdoms, Lost Admiral* or just to trade games with. Call Mike W. in the Berkeley, CA area at H-(510) 525-3686 after 6pm local time.

Opponents wanted for *Conquered Kingdoms, Empire Deluxe, The Perfect General* and others. Amiga or IBM. Please call mornings at H-(516) 758-7823 or write to Nick Galante, 246 Fair Harbor Drive, Patchoque, NY 11772-3344.

Seeking local opponents for *Empire Deluxe, The Perfect General, WWII-Pacific, Command HQ, Modem Wars* and many others. Call Jim in North County, San Diego, CA at H-(619) 674-1543.

I am interested in finding opponents for *Battles of Destiny, Empire Deluxe, The Perfect General* and *Pacific War*. Contact Chuck Frye at H-(803) 546-1543 in Georgetown, SC.

Local opponents wanted for *Falcon, F-15 SEIII* or *Tornado*. Call Rod in Memphis, TN at H-(901) 527-8764 or W-(901) 525-2557. **CGW**



The War To End All Wars

A Review Of SSI's *The Great War*

by H.E. Dille

SSI's *The Great War* should not be considered a serious study of the war that ended chivalry in a blast of machine gun fire. Indeed, if it were such a game it is doubtful that it would hold as much appeal. After the initial offensives of the First World War, the momentum was lost in a quagmire of mud as dark and thick as the political climate which spawned the conflict. Over the course of four years, each side periodically attempted to break the deadlock without success. In the end, attrition became the major motivator for political resolution and the end of hostilities.



Despite the fact that the First World War saw the first significant use of many modern weapons—tanks, aircraft, anti-aircraft batteries, anti-tank weapons, machine guns, submarines, long range artillery—it remains a poor choice for a conventional wargame because of the lack of tactical mobility. Good wargame designs rightfully emphasize the importance of fire and maneuver, and WWI allowed little room for the latter. Fortunately for gamers, SSI's offering does not approach the topic in a conventional manner. *The Great War* is an abstract strategy game that has greater kinship to *Empire Deluxe* than most of the other SSI wargaming titles. Of course, it has an even greater kinship to *Battle Isle*, **Blue Byte**'s earlier design for **UbiSoft**, being built on a similar engine.

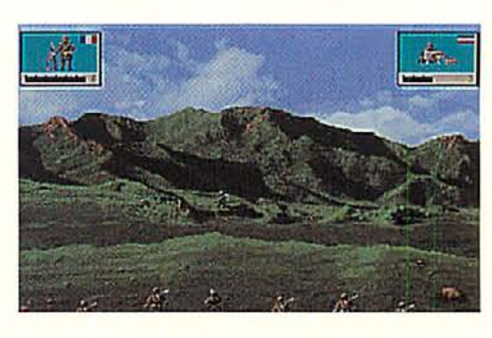
A commander in WWI would have certainly appreciated the simple elegance SSI has afforded commanders in their game. Unburdened by limited intelligence or the delicate Achilles' tendon that is proper logistics, players of this system may devote their entire attention to the essence of combat command: the planning and execution of fire and movement. Because historical campaigns and scenarios are eschewed in favor of cleverly designed fictional engagements, lack of mobility is not an issue. Indeed, the quickest way to win any of the scenarios is to thrust deep into enemy territory and capture the opposing HQ, though this is never an easy task.

The Lay Of The Land

The Great War offers 72 scenarios, 24 each for the single British or German player, and 24 constructed specifically for two human players. Within each scenario, the player begins with an HQ, several units of different types, and possibly a factory or depot. Both factories and depots are capable of repairing battle damage for existing units, but only factories may use build points to create new units. The opposing side begins with control of some buildings which may be captured via infantry or cavalry units, and there may also be several neutral factories or depots on the map. The latter often contain reserves of units which may prove vital to shifting the balance of power. As such, initial moves must attempt to gain control of as many neutral structures as possible.

Factories cannot be constructed, thus control of those close to the front lines becomes essential to timely reinforcement. Depots, on the other hand, may be built whenever special depot building units are available in a scenario. These units require two unmolested turns and four squares of flat terrain to build a depot. Because of the latter restriction, there are a limited number of places depots may be constructed on each map. Astute players will carefully consider the strategic location and surrounding terrain of depots so constructed, as they should support offensive operations without impeding the flow of troops to the front. Also, proximity to the front lines for quick turnaround of repaired units must be weighed against the enemy's ability to mount a local, limited offensive and capture the structure.

Each map contains a mixture of terrain types, from deep water to mountain peaks. Every terrain affects unit types differently, but the player need not consult a myriad of charts and tables to ascertain these relationships. Rather, by clicking on the unit during the movement phase, the complete range of



movement is highlighted. By clicking again anywhere within that area, the player plots the intended destination for the next phase. This is but one example of the elegant and unobtrusive interface.

The Weapons Of War

The most basic unit in the game, the pawn of the system if you wish, is the infantry unit. It begins with a base strength of six and no experience. Its elder brother, the elite infantry, is slightly more capable in the field, but also begins with a base strength of six. In fact, all units in the game with the exception of bomber aircraft and bunkers begin with a value of six. Of course, if all units begin with the same numerical strength, one may won-

The Great War: 1914-1918



TITLE:	The Great War: 1914-1918
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, VGA graphics, 8 MB hard disk space, MS-DOS 5.0 or higher; supports AdLib and Sound Blaster sound cards
# OF PLAYERS:	1 or 2 (single computer—no modem play)
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNERS:	Ralph J. Kraft, Bernhard Ewers, Thomas Hauser
PUBLISHER:	Strategic Simulations Inc. Sunnyvale, CA (408) 737-6800

der what the point is in having different unit types at all? The answer lies in a more complete understanding of the combat model.

Whenever two units battle and inflict casualties to the other side, they receive one experience point. If their attack results in the destruction of the enemy unit, two experience points are awarded. The maximum number of experience points which may be accumulated in this manner are six.



Unit strength is not the deciding factor in combat, serving only as a multiplier and measure of attrition (i.e., if it is allowed to drop to zero the unit is lost). The types of units involved is more important, but their experience levels are the key to combat preparedness. To explain, let us consider an initial engagement between mutually inexperienced infantry and elite infantry. We have noted that the latter is an inherently more capable unit, thus one should expect an isolated meeting between the two would eventually result in the destruction of the infantry unit. Knowing this, the Commander of the inferior force should seek to attrite some of the enemy, then withdraw the unit behind the lines for repair.

Having reduced the elite infantry to a strength of three, with three experience points, for example, the infantry unit falls back to a neighboring depot with equivalent experience and repairs itself from a strength of one to six. Returning to the line with experience intact, the infantry unit proceeds to destroy the remnants of the elite infantry over two turns. Reduced to a strength of two now, because the elite infantry was still capable of inflicting 4 to 3 losses, the infantry unit returns to the depot a second time for repair. It will emerge a very powerful unit, however, because it has gained maximum experience at this point. Experience ratings not only increase a unit's ability to inflict damage on a given target, which varies by type, it also reduces the amount of damage which may be inflicted on the unit by all other unit types.

Taking Command

Each scenario is designed to reflect actions over a two month period. Between scenarios, a historical breakdown of the actual events of the same period is presented. These cut sequences are not influenced by success or failure on the board, and exist solely as background material for interested players. References in the manual to a "Campaign Phase" with variable victory conditions are in error. There is no provision for a campaign or any form of linkage between scenarios. As such, one who seeks to alter the course of the entire war will be disappointed.

A scenario is played in a series of turns, with each side alternating between attack and movement phases. When one side is planning movement, the other is plotting attacks, but neither action occurs until both players have input their commands and elected to proceed to the next turn. When this happens, units will attempt to execute their orders, but may be precluded from doing so. Units that were ordered to retreat to a nearby depot may be destroyed before they can leave the line, for example, or assaults may be wasted on positions that have already been eliminated.

Attacks are resolved via animated cut screens or, if desired, quick graphic displays. The latter significantly speed up the game. The real time resolution of both player actions forces one to plan moves in advance, much as in chess, and makes for a more interesting play dynamic. At the end of the given turn, players proceed to the next order input phase, albeit with their roles reversed.

The interface for the input of these orders is well chosen. All commands are controlled via the mouse. The player positions the cursor over the unit to be manipulated, then holds down the left mouse button. With the button still depressed, the player drags the mouse in one of the cardinal directions and the icon changes on screen to reflect different command options. It's smooth, slick and may be mastered in just a few minutes without having to crack the manual at all.

Many of the maps may be viewed as puzzles, where success lies in discerning the best strategic approach to the terrain and opposing forces. Winning is possible through capture of the opposing HQ, where one receives a greater number of points the more enemy units are left on the board, or through destruction of all opposing forces in a prolonged war of attrition. The computer General is very adept at precluding, or at least making very difficult, early capture of their HQ. It is less successful at combating a war of attrition, however.



The reason for this shortfall is readily apparent. The computer has a tendency to favor the construction of new units over the repair of existing, combat hardened veterans. It will attempt to do the latter at times, but frequently fails to pull these units off the line in time to avoid destruction by a human General who recognizes their potential danger. As such, later in the game, savvy human players with full strength, full experience units will walk all over inexperienced computer reinforcements striving to bolster failing lines and halt an unrelenting advance.

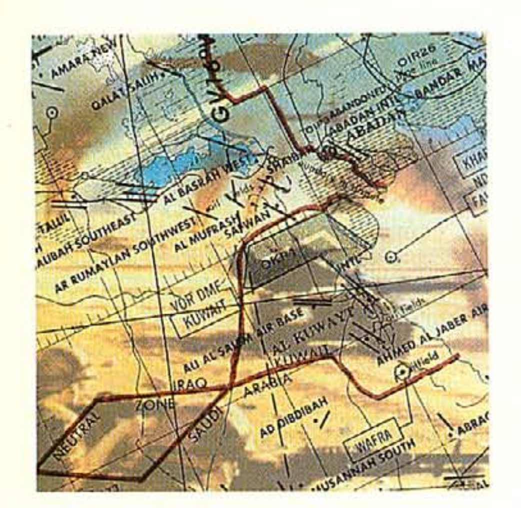


This has a definite impact on replay value because even though new scenarios present different challenges, the basic formula for success remains the same. Rotate units to the rear for repair, which is cheaper than replacement, and one will not only have more powerful units, but also more reserve build points for construction when necessary.

Lifting The Barrage

As we all know, the First World War did not turn out to be the "War to end all Wars." Likewise, *The Great War* could not be considered the game to end all games. More significant achievements lay just beyond the next trench, but as always the problem is getting across "No Man's Land."

When the smoke clears, however, players of *The Great War* will find that they have stumbled on a much more playable game than any historical recreation of events could hope to be. Even with a slightly inadequate computer opponent, a great deal of time must be invested to obtain consistent mastery, and players will certainly obtain their money's worth in that period. If one is blessed with another human opponent, then the replay value of the product is extended immensely. **CGW**

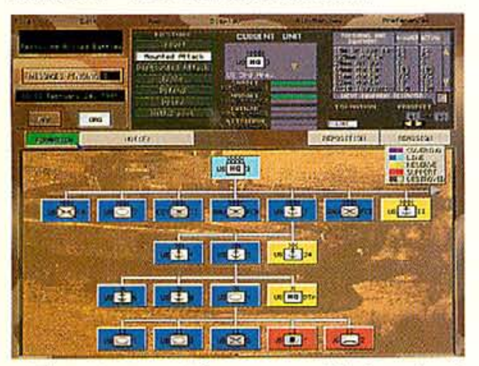


Let's Do The Gulf War Again

A Veteran Revisits Three-Sixty's *Patriot*

Re-Review by M. Evan Brooks

Patriot was initially reviewed in *Computer Gaming World* #105 (April 1993) to a less than resounding acclamation. In fact, *Patriot* received virtually unanimous condemnation by the media and in the consumer market. While the *Patriot* design was boldly innovative, it was dreadfully unplayable. Difficult to boot and prone to crashes, these programming oversights were nothing compared to the aloofness and unplayability of the game system itself. *Patriot* assumed the mantle of "The Canine of Combat."



Thus, it was with some trepidation that I examined the updated program, version 1.10. Could it have fixed what was so wrong before? Could an abject failure be rendered a success with one patch?

Manual Override

The documentation has now been supplemented with a 54-page manual that walks the user through three separate scenarios at the brigade, division and corps levels. While there are occasional discrepancies between what is printed and what is on the screen, the tutorials can, unlike the flow of the original game, actually be followed!

Also, certain previous errors have been corrected (local times are now correctly noted and the Battle of Khafji occurs on the correct date), and each scenario is summarized as to the general situation. The net effect of the supplement is to allow the user to gain access to the simulation. Granted, the innovation of the system requires much thought, and certain concepts remain somewhat ambiguous (e.g. actual combat positioning), but at least one can now use the program.

A Farewell to Crashes

Unlike the initial release, the patch was easy to install and easy to run. No separate boot disk was required, and everything ran smoothly — no lock-ups, no crashes. By itself, this is a major improvement.

A map scale indicator is now available as an option, and this allows one to conceptualize the distances involved. The maps have remained the same, and the problem with shifting fields of vision remains. The map shifting function is not sensitive enough to allow the player to center his area of interest. The zoom function could have been simplified, but it is workable.

The sounds are still limited to opening music and sparse battle sounds in the program itself, but at least now my *Pro-Audio Spectrum 16* was easily recognized by the program.

Mechanics

The game mechanics are equivalent to the initial release, except one can now understand what is going on. The organization tree and force tailoring is a concept easily grasped, and it gives a quick rendition of the Order of Battle. Indeed, it is so accurate that a military intelligence officer who happened to see the program wondered if it contained security violations.

Using boundary lines as a game mechanism is pure militarese. The initial release seemed to be a wargame of Harvard Graphics—great presentation, no input. To some degree this remains true of the revised program, in that the user has little to do once contact is made. Nevertheless, what impressed me most was that this was a wargame straight out of Command & General Staff College or the War College.



In fact, this remains *Patriot's* greatest strength and failure — it is simply too military. There is no feeling of action or vicarious thrill/terror. Instead, *Patriot* should be marketed to the defense establishment as a serious tool for decision-making. This would involve some adjustment (e.g. area of world, database, etc.), but it would see the product being used to its greatest advantage.

Patriot Version 1.10



NAME:	Patriot Version 1.10
PRICE:	$69.95
SYSTEM:	IBM
REQUIREMENTS:	386 or better, 4MB of RAM, Super VGA graphics, 3.2MB hard drive space, DOS 5.0 or OS/2 2.0, mouse; Ad Lib and SoundBlaster sound cards supported
PROTECTION:	None
DESIGNER:	ARTECH Digital Entertainment
PUBLISHER:	Three Sixty Pacific Campbell, CA (408) 879-9144



Patriot is really a *series* of games rolled into one. Depending on the command level chosen (brigade, division, corps, army), one will have certain choices. However, the user should be careful to maintain his proper station. A division commander should not involve himself in company operations. Remember, generals plan the battle, colonels implement the decision-making, and captains fight the battle. While the program will allow one to drop below his level of command, such actions often cause one to lose track of the greater battle.

The battle reports often stream in fast and furiously once contact is made. Often, the sheer multitude of incoming information obscures the main screen and overloads the user, forcing him to eventually change to a higher command level to reduce the plethora of messages. I am still unsure as to the proper solution, but this definitely needs some additional work.

I regret not being able to claim mastery of the system. Even with much thought, time and perseverance, I am somewhat lacking in confidence with regard to my expertise with the system. Still, 23 years of military experience (of which all but four were involved in operations and planning) give me a sense of assurance that I can figure it out. One wonders about the casual wargamer, however.

Fixed wing air support and amphibious assaults have now been added and determining air missions has become a mere mouse stroke. Finally, the vulnerability of the M1 tank to enemy fire has been drastically reduced.

Designer Sid Meier has said on numerous occasions that if it isn't fun, he doesn't do it. And that is *Patriot's* failing—it often is not fun. It may be accurate, it may be the most direct link to actual military planning that the civilian user will ever see, but there is little sense of fun.

Milspec Wargame

Patriot always appeared to be innovative. It has now begun to realize some of its potential. In all candor, I would not recommend it to a casual gamer. However, for the user who is familiar with Army planning techniques, the program appears to possess merit.



For those users who suffered through the initial release, I would strongly urge them to secure this latest update. For those who have an insatiable interest in the Gulf War (all three of you), the new version should prove to be beneficial. Finally, for those users who want to know the intricacies of military planning, or for those with actual experience, I can now note that *Patriot* is accessible. Just be prepared to work at it. Finally, for those users enrolled in Army Command & General Staff or War College, *Patriot* may well assist in their coursework. CGW

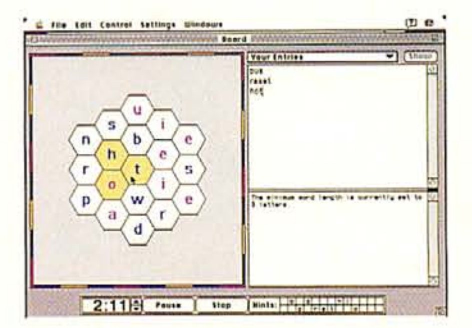
Taking A PEEK



The Comic Collector

AbleSoft
4824 George Washington Hwy., Suite 103
Yorktown, VA 23692
(800) 545-9009

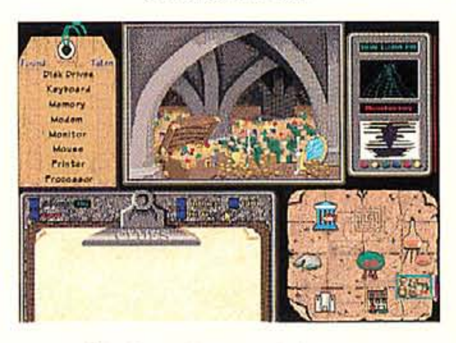
THE COMIC COLLECTOR: Anyone in the hobby/business of comic book collecting should consider this versatile inventory program. Not only does *The Comic Collector* feature numerous ways to access data, but it offers several different ways to make it easier to enter your custom data. Best of all, it allows you to display (on screen), print or file (on disk) information based on price, individual title, artists, writers, demand, active titles, inactive titles, or even the total value of your collection. Additionally, the database includes the entire *Overstreet Comic Data & Prices Guide,* and you can purchase a quarterly or monthly update in disk format by subscription ($24 for four issues, $60 for 12 issues). IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #1.



Word Connection

Action Software
P.O. Box 1448
Ponca City, OK 74602
(405) 762-1622

WORD CONNECTION: Funny how the tasks we used to do for homework have become leisure time entertainment. In *Word Connection,* the object is to string connected letters together, going back and forth or around and around a grid in order to form words. The player determines the size of the grid of connected geometric shapes (either squares, triangles or hexagons), and races against a clock. It is very easy to play. What is surprising is the size of its dictionary, which includes many slang and irregular word usages. Wordsmiths will welcome this pleasant little gaming diversion. Macintosh ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #2.



The Great Computer Adventure

American Training International, Inc.
12638 Beatrice Street
Los Angeles, CA 90066
(800) 955-5284

THE GREAT COMPUTER ADVENTURE: Children ages 7 to 12 now have a fun way to learn how a computer really works. What components make up a computer? What's the purpose of a microprocessor? What about this thing called memory? All these questions and more are explained in the process of completing *The Great Computer Adventure,* a point-and-click, puzzle-based graphic adventure. The story is a simple one: a family has been turned into jewels by a mischievous gremlin. To restore these individuals to their former selves, the player must find hidden pieces of a special "charmed" computer that can do the transformation. Seven puzzles of varying difficulty and style must be solved, including picture matching, word deciphering, letter transposing, crossword puzzling, maze solving and others. Since clues are randomized, multiple levels of play are provided as one moves from site to site in the game world. A built-in Personal Digital Assistant provides the player with descriptions of each computer component, while a notepad offers clues as necessary. Though playing time can be rather short, a modest degree of replayability offers young minds a good value and a fun experience. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #3.



Axis, The Gamecheater

Baseline Publishing, Inc.
1760 Moriah Woods Blvd., Suite 5
Memphis, TN 38117
(800) 926-9677

AXIS, THE GAMECHEATER: Invincibility has its benefits. This is especially true when it comes to some of the more demanding action games on the market. While many "cheats" have been available in the shareware and freeware realms, a commercial program of this type has yet to be seen. A significant new product designed specifically for this purpose is *Axis, The GameCheater* by **Baseline.** Available for PC compatibles and Macs, *Axis* allows the gamer to manipulate his or her game files to override predefined game functions with assignable hot keys, add time, lives, money, extra fuel, and even jump to different levels. Baseline's modular design allows periodic updates to the program to support new game releases. These modules are available at no charge through many on-line services. At present, over 40 games are supported in the PC version (*S.W.O.T.L., Lemmings 2, Ultima VI, X-wing, Castles II),* and over 50 in the Mac version. But one can only cheat so much: each game has limits in the degree of game control manipulation it will allow. If you're stuck midway through a game, you might be able to get by with a little help from this friend. IBM, Macintosh ($69.95, $59.95). Circle Reader Service #4.



Super Maze Wars

Callisto Corporation
182 West Central St.
Natick, MA 01760-9582
(508) 655-0707

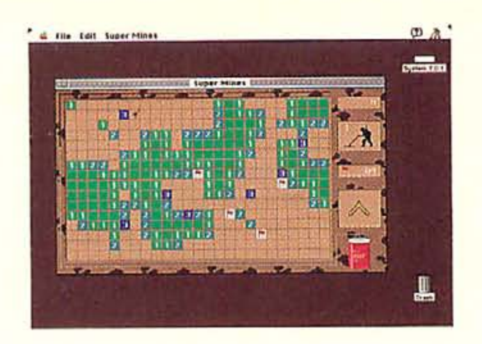
SUPER MAZE WARS: The Macintosh's domination of the network game market continues with *Super Maze Wars.* This arcade-style, 3D action maze game pits players against tenacious robot enemies, networked human opponents, or both. Presented in a first-person, 3D perspective, *Super Maze Wars* challenges the player to enter their Maze-Cruiser and roam the complex hallways of a foreign world in an effort to reign victorious over up to seven human- and/or robot-controlled opponents. In the process of this search-and-destroy mission, the player must balance the cost of gathering valuable gems

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE
31	360 Pacific, Inc.	242, 243
32	3DI Productions	137
119	AT & T	59
*	Abracadata LTD	178
33	Access Software	138,139
34	Accolade	71
35	Accolade	73
36	Accoustic Research	246
37	Activision Entertainment	75
38	Activision Entertainment	77
39	Activision Entertainment	79
167	Advanced Digital Systems	217
139	Adventure Learning	176
40	Aldealabs	236
41	Apogee Software	81
140	Athena Software Inc.	164
42	Aztech Systems	191
43	Bare Bones Software	120
44	Baseline Publishing	69
141	Binary Zoo	171
47	CH Products	197
48	CMS Academic Software	208
45	Cape Cod Connection	186
46	Chips & Bits	87
46	Chips & Bits	89
46	Chips & Bits	91
46	Chips & Bits	93
46	Chips & Bits	95
46	Chips & Bits	97
46	Chips & Bits	99
46	Chips & Bits	101
49	Colorado Spectrum	26
50	Computer Express	106
50	Computer Express	107
50	Computer Express	108
50	Computer Express	109
142	Computer Tooter Pals	166
51	Compsult	104
52	Computability	199
53	Computer System Sol.	212
54	Creative Labs, Inc.	131
55	Cyberdreams	121
137	Davidson	185
143	Devasoft	174
56	Disk-Count Software	219
58	Domark	203
57, 70	Domark	204-205
59	Dongleware Publishing	257
60	Dongleware Publishing	267
61	Electronic Arts	7
62	Electronic Arts	32-33
63	Electronic Arts	50-51
64	Electronic Innov. Design	255
65	Entertainment International	127
66	Entertainment International	129
67	Falcon Northwest	27
146	Family Ware	176
68	Flagship Magazine	256
69	Formgen	2
147	Formgen	165
70	Future Vision	162, 163
72	GE Information System	111
71	Gamer's Gold	235
73	GEnie	63
74	GEnie	65
75	GEnie	67
76	Genovation	143
77	Gosselin Computer Consult.	130
79	HPS Simulations	225
*	Handyman Computing	178
149	High-Tech Expression	157
148	High-Tech Expression	159
78	Homebase Products	130
150	Humongous Software	151
166	Humongous Software	153
151	Imager Inc.	170
80	Impressions	3
81	Impressions	13
82	Impressions	15
83	Impressions	29
84	Inner Circle Technology	211
85	Interplay	145
152	Jemmasoft	175
86	Keyboard Commander	240
153	Knowledge Adventure	154, 155
87	Lance Haffenr Games	236
154	Landmark Solutions	161
88	Legend Entertainment	181
89	Liberty International	261
90	Logitech	117
91	Logitech	119
*	LucasArts	122-123
*	LucasArts	275
94	Maxis Software	49
95	Megasoft Entertainment	183
96	Microprose Software	103
97	MicroProse Software	105
167	Mindcraft	115
161	Media Vision	231
98	Media Vision	233
99	Microsoft Corporation	18-19
100	Miller Associates	229
101	Mission Control	226, 227
157	New Attitude	174
102	New World Computing	41
158	Ocean Software	172, 173
159	Opcode Interactive	167
103	Origin Systems	276
104	Origin Systems	39
105	Origin Systems	47
106	Origin Systems	61
107	Paper Mayhem	212
108	Papyrus Publishing	31
*	Planet Kids	223
109	Psygnosis	5
203	Psygnosis	213
204	Psygnosis	214
205	Psygnosis	215
110,111	QQP	20-21
201,202	QQP	22-23
112	Quality Computers	229
113	Quadra Interactive	135
114	Readysoft	265
115	Recreational Software	187
160	Romtime	168
116	Sierra Dynamix	53
117	Sierra/Dynamix	56-57
120	Sideline Software	232
121	Sigma Designs	8-9
162	Silicon Alley	169
122	Simulations Canada	232
123	Sir-Tech Software	11
163	Software Ent. LTD	178
124	Software Toolworks	189
125	Spectrum HoloByte	44-45
126	Spectrum HoloByte	37
*	Strategic Simulations, Inc.	43
128	Thrustmaster Inc.	230
129	Time Warner I. Group	141
130	Triax	245
131	Tribex Intertech Inc.	126
132	Twin Dolphin Games	201
133	Viacom	113
134	Viking Software	194-195
*	Michael Winterbauer	249
135	Zero's and One's	247
165	Zero's and One's	179

* *No Reader Service number. Please call advertiser for information.*

with the chance of incurred damage. Games can be played against the clock or for a set number of points or rounds. Six scenarios are included, ranging in emphasis from pure adrenaline pumping action to strategic object collection. As expected, a game like this involves more than just a quick trigger finger: strategic thinking is a must for one to succeed and become King of the Maze. Macintosh ($64.95 single, $99.95 network). Circle Reader Service #5.

SUPER MINES: "A Strategic Game of Logic and Daring," that's how Callisto describes their new offering for the Mac, a variant of the *Bomber* games that have proliferated on many computer platforms for some time. Actually, *Super Mines* includes two game variations: *Super Mines* proper and *Mini Mines*. *Super Mines* challenges the player to safely mark all the mines on each given playfield without setting any off. The faster one completes a mine field, the higher the score. Field "promotions" also increase one's scoring potential. *Mini Mines* is a shorter version of the former game with a focus on playing against the clock for high scores. Both games offer varying difficulty levels and a built-in, on-line help system. What sets *Super Mines* apart from other *Bomber* titles is the military theme the game is presented in, and the use of increasing ranks that affect one's score. The player's reward, beyond a high score, is to work his or her way from Private to General of the Army. A guaranteed blast for Mac gamers, *Super Mines* will keep the player guessing for a good while to come. Macintosh ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #6.



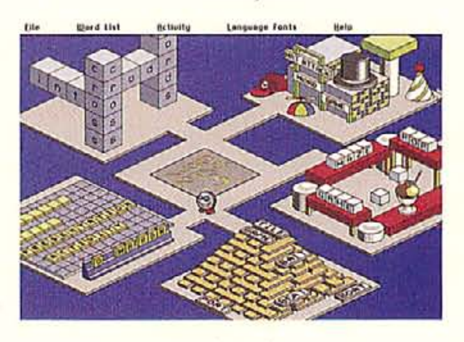
Super Mines



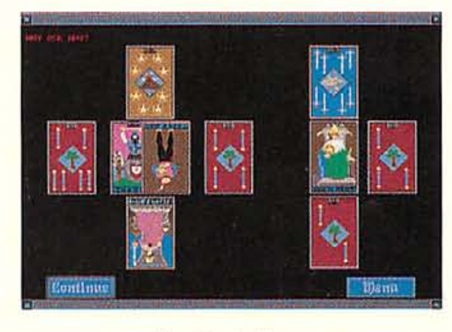
Homey D. Clown



Surf Ninjas



Word Attack 3



The Mystic Tarot

Capstone Software
Airport Corporate Center
7200 Corporate Center Dr., Suite 500
Miami, FL 33126
(800) 468-7226

HOMEY D. CLOWN: That surly bozo from "In Living Color" is in town, and he's in no mood to entertain. He's got an appointment with a major studio for a six figure deal, and anybody that gets in his way is gonna get socked. Homey be hittin' the streets to pick up items and figure out how to get to the studio. Bad guys and muggers be tryin' to take his wallet, but do Homey lose hope? *I don't think so. Homey don't play like that!* Homey be smackin' those bad men with his sock, so he doesn't wake up in the hospital and have to start all over again. Just lead this clown around with a mouse, cause Homey don't type. He's a cute character to put in a game, and may appeal to the pre-adolescent crowd for a few minutes. But is Homey up to entertaining a real gamer out in computerland? *I don't think so. "Homey" don't play like that!* IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #7.

SURF NINJAS: You've seen the movie and you're now obligated to purchase every piece of merchandise associated with it: Surf Ninjas Pajamas, the Surf Ninjas lunch box, and **Capstone's** latest software license, *Surf Ninjas* the computer game featuring side-scrolling karate action. The player steps into the shoes of Johnny McQuinn, heir to the throne of Patu-San, destined to rid his island of the evil Colonel Chi. Character movement is limited to flying kicks, regular kicks and punches. However, punching or kicking seems to make little difference when actually pummeling one's foes. There is no interface per se except for a means of picking up and dropping objects. Graphics are not bad, but the keyboard combinations for the characters' moves are perhaps this game's best puzzle. Documentation is adequate, but typically sparse. You're probably better off with the pajamas. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #8.

Davidson & Associates, Inc.
19840 Pioneer Ave.
Torrance, CA 90503
(800) 556-6141

WORD ATTACK 3: A major upgrade to their *Word Attack Plus*, **Davidson**'s *Word Attack 3* is a strong educational title for users ages 10 to adult. However, it only has a lukewarm feel compared to similar titles when it comes to the snap and sizzle that keeps kids glued to the computer monitor. Consisting of five distinct modules, *Word Attack 3* stresses developing a strong vocabulary, drawing from over 3200 words grouped into categories and word lists based upon difficulty level and subject areas. Presentation Activity introduces users to words, definitions and sentences in a *Scrabble*-like format. Tile Game allows one to match words with their definitions while trying to beat the clock. Those who enjoy crosswords will find Crossword Puzzle challenging. Maze Game, as the name implies, sends the user through a platform-based maze seeking words to match the appropriate definitions. Finally, Hat Game, the most entertaining offering in *Word Attack 3*, features arcade-style interaction as one's character tosses hats at the correct words in a column of banners. Progress is tracked for each user. A handy built-in editor allows one to add their own customized lists, and a print function turns crossword puzzles, word search puzzles, sentence completion tests and flash cards into hardcopy. If the kids don't mind the "low impact" presentation Word Attack 3 offers, there is much value to be gleaned from this product. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #9.

Empire Graphics
P.O. Box 964
Union, NJ 07083
(908) 964-7864

THE MYSTIC TAROT: Originally released at *The Tarot Master* for the Amiga, this program concentrates clearly and directly on all aspects of Tarot fortune telling. Users can get an animated examination of every card, both in its right side up and upside down aspects, and have their fortunes told in both the 3-card and 10-card patterns. A handy print feature allows those who have had their



Give Your Joystick a Thrill.
In the early 21st century, staged fighting has become a lucrative profession for female hardbodies, with dozens of legal arenas in the city. But for the leanest, meanest warriors, the real money comes from the illegal bouts held outside the city. It's the hottest day of the summer and you're baking inside a dilapidated warehouse. You — and your opponent — wear the latest in MECHA armor. The best fighting armor in the world.
METAL & LACE
THE BATTLE OF THE ROBO BABES
This won't be any picnic. With the intense heat and action, you'll both end up in less than full body dress.
It's dream babes in heavy armor battling for prize money — action packed, arcade style fun for your PC. But be warned — with its intense violence and voluptuous women, Metal & Lace: Battle Of The Robo Babes is for mature audiences only. And not for the faint hearted. Available now at your nearest dealer or call 1-800-258-MEGA. Or write Megatech, P.O. Box 11333, Torrance, CA 90510. Visa, Mastercard, checks accepted.
System requirements: 286-20 or faster machine (386 recommended) with 640K RAM, hard disk, joystick recommended. Operating Sys.: MS DOS 3.3 or above, Windows 3.1. Graphics compatible with VGA. Sound support: Sound Blaster, Sound Blaster Pro, Thunder Board, Pro Audio Spectrum , Adlib Gold and Speed Master.
NR-13
This game is not for the faint-hearted. Contains violence and some material inappropriate for minors.
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR PLAYERS UNDER 13.
For a free demo, call our 24hr. BBS at 310-539-7739. (8N1)
MEGATECH
All companies and product names mentioned are trademarks or registered trademarks of the respective owners.
Circle Reader Service #89

fortunes told to save them for future reference. IBM ($29.95), Amiga ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #10.

Hi Tech Expressions
584 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
(800) 447-6543

STREET FIGHTER II: The "bad boys" have come to town in **Capcom's** *Street Fighter II*, "The Baddest Brawl Of Them All." In this action title straight out of America's video arcades, players are pitted against eight of the world's toughest and wildest street fighters. Use martial arts kicks and punches, flesh-singeing flame spells and ear-piercing sonic booms to kick the silicon snot out of them. *Street Fighter II* features one and two-player modes, multiple difficulty levels, adjustable time limits, and stereo sound effects with major sound card support. Large, smoothly-animated graphics bring the action to life, but only for those with 386 or better systems. Expect the full arcade equivalent in this destructive, no-holds-barred title. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #11.

Impressions Software, Inc.
222 Third Street, Suite 0234
Cambridge, MA 02142
(203) 676-9002

EDWARD GRABOWSKI'S THE BLUE & THE GRAY: We thought the American Civil War was a bloody disaster until we saw the string of recent strategic wargames on the subject. In an effort to reverse this trend of games that have, generally, disappointed wargamers, *The Blue & The Gray* gives players two games in one. Strategically, it is a turn-based, division level game of low-to-moderate complexity with weekly turns played out on a grid of 20 mile squares. The feel is akin to the popular introductory board wargame *A House Divided*. When units meet for battle, the game telescopes down to a grand tactical level where battles are fought in real time using Impressions' "micro miniatures" system. As the brigades maneuver around the randomly generated battle maps, one definitely gets the feel of animated lead figures. While the inclusion of massive, cogent documentation (including a custom written history book and, for some, a VHS video tape on the Civil War), the red flag for "historians" and "simulation" junkies will be the game's many compromises away from these aspects (for instance, there are no leadership rules). Promised expansion disks will provide modem play and additional pre-generated historical battles. IBM, Amiga ($69.95). Circle Reader Service #12.

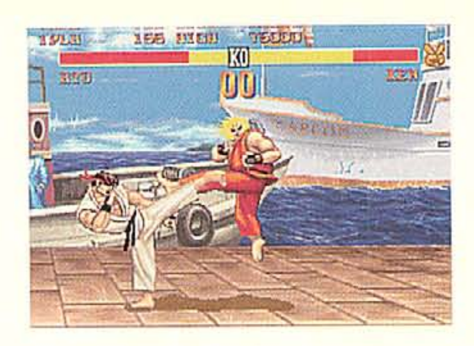
MicroLeague Interactive Software
University Office Plaza, Bellevue Bldg.,
Suite 201, 262 Chapman Road
Newark, DE 19702
(800) 334-6572

BRIX: Grab 'em, slide 'em, drop 'em, match 'em, stack 'em and zap 'em! Right out of the *Tetris*-style mold, *Brix*, produced by **Epic Megagames** and released through **MicroLeague**, offers the player an addictive game of over 200 levels of play with a devious array of mind bending puzzles to solve. Play, accordingly, is fast paced, being timed and requiring one to complete each level before the clock reaches zero. This puzzler's goal? To remove all the Brix (colored and patterned blocks) from play by eliminating them in pairs, or by removing individual Brix with the aid of laser cannons, acid pools, boiling lava and more. Though initial levels are quite easy, play difficulty escalates quickly as the puzzles increase in complexity. Colorful VGA graphics and an original music score add to *Brix*'s enjoyment. However, it's the brain teasers that make this game a real time stealer. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #13.

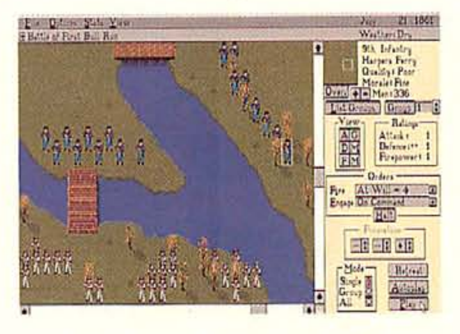
THE PRO PAK: Sports fans who can't decide whether to slide into home with a computer baseball sim or go deep for a football title can now have both in MicroLeague's *The Pro Pack*, a combo pack featuring *MicroLeague Baseball 4* and *MicroLeague Football 2*. The baseball game places the player in charge of historical major league teams, featuring direct connection to USA Today stats, manager profile editing, righty and lefty breakdowns, seasonal and stadium factors, and an expanded 30-man roster. The football game offers fast-paced, hard-hitting pigskin action with the player as head coach, calling the offense, setting the defense, making substitutions and even controlling the weather. Both titles offer digitized film footage and digitized sound with crowd noise, 256-color VGA graphics, close-up action zoom views, season play, league and exhibition play, game box scores and summaries, programmable customization of opponents and detailed stats. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #14.

Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052-6399
(206) 882-8080

MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 5: The wild blue yonder over Redmond, WA has never been as wild or as blue as it is now with the release of *Microsoft Flight Simulator 5*. This long anticipated update of **Microsoft**'s best-selling sim provides digital pilots with a long list of new features to enhance their flights of fancy. Among the new features are: a new latitude and longitude system to help users locate destinations and current location; a "Land Me" feature that enables inexperienced pilots to complete their flights without landing nose-first; and more realistic sound effects and scenery (which expands in detail as approached by the aircraft). Additionally, the weather system has been replaced with a more user-friendly and controllable version. Basically, the whole shebang has been spruced up to provide a more realistic and attractive flight environment. Photo-realistic instrument pan-

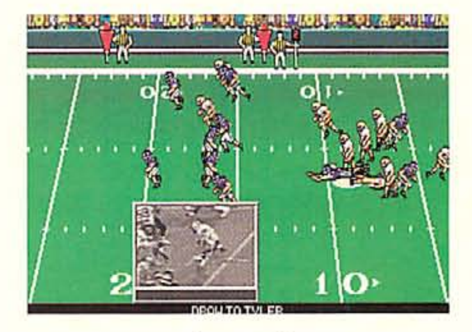


Street Fighter II


Edward Grabowski's The Blue & The Gray



Brix


The Pro Pak


Microsoft Flight Simulator 5


ON TARGET
LINKS 386
ACES OF THE PACIFIC
Ultima Underworld II Labyrinth of Worlds
INDIANA JONES and the FATE of ATLANTIS
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
Interplay's Star Trek: 25th Anniversary
Don't go unarmed to the software store. For more than 12 years, *Computer Gaming World* has provided game hunters with the best information in the field. *CGW* is the magazine for gamers who want *more* than quick overviews of the latest games. We're loaded with the most complete reviews, new strategies, and the best hints for the discerning hunter.
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els (digitized from actual aircraft instrument panels) and realistic time-of-day effects have been added, as well. From flying the friendly skies in a Cessna Skylane to a Learjet to a sailplane, *Flight Simulator 5* offers something for most airborne gamers. IBM ($64.95). Circle Reader Service #15.

Mindcraft
2291 205th St., Suite 201
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 320-5215

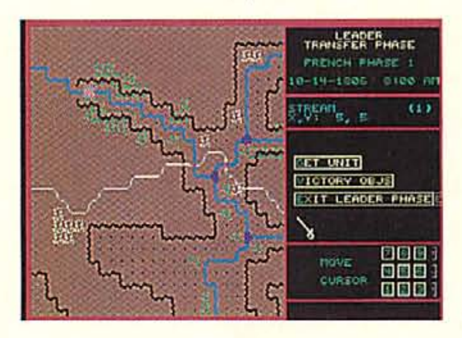
STRIKE SQUAD: Walking into a bar in the year 2208 with four heavily armed and armored mercenaries is sure to liven things up. Instantly the mercs under the player's control open fire at everything that moves with laser blasters, rockets and a few well-lobbed grenades. Assassins, drunks and space villains the likes of which haven't been seen since the spaceport at Mos Eisely return fire, but soon lie in crumpled piles with bloody pools about their midst. The mercs search the bodies and room for guns and goodies, then move on in their quest to combat the evil insectoids that have zapped the home planet (presumably as revenge for the bug zapper). There are 30 unique mercs under one's command in this arcade/role-playing/space quest adventure which unfolds in many missions on a number of worlds. *Strike Squad* uses the same engine, interface and 3-D scrolling perspective as *Tegel's Mercenaries*, but players may choose real-time or turn-based combat. Two-player game play, digitized sounds and humorous quips between mercenaries help draw commanders into the fray. IBM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #16.

Novastar Game Company
P.O. Box 1813
Rocklin, CA 95677
(916) 624-7113

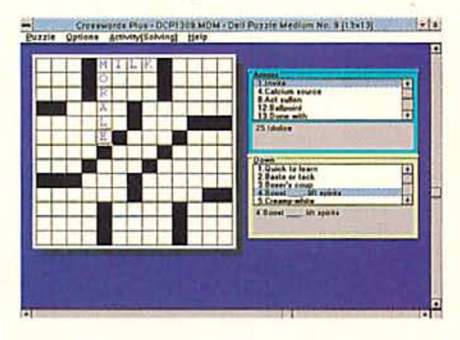
BATTLES OF NAPOLEON SCENARIO PACK: Although **SSI**'s classic wargame *Battles of Napoleon* is long out of print, players keep returning to it like Napoleon from Elba. The game combined a grand tactical miniatures battle engine with scenario building tools, so it's no wonder that more and more of Napoleon's battles found their way into computer code. There are five scenario disks available to supplement this lost classic: Disk 1 features the battles of Austerlitz, Marengo, Dedoubt, Utitsa and Maida; Disk 2 has a Bridge Battle, New Orleans, Medellin, Albuera and Santon; Disk 3 presents Camden, Hobkirk, Guilford, Cowpens, Eutaw Springs and King's Mountain; while Disk 4 has a Hill battle, Eylau, Wagram, Leipzig I, Smolensk, Plancenoit, Waterloo II and Bladensburg; and, finally, Disk 5 has Ligny, Vimiero, Village, Retreat, Leipzig II, Podubno, Quatre Bras II and Aspern-Essling. All disks are available for IBM, while disks 1-3 are also available for Apple II and C-64 machines (remember those?). Each disk is $10 when sold separately or $45 for the complete set of five. Circle Reader Service #17.



Strike Squad



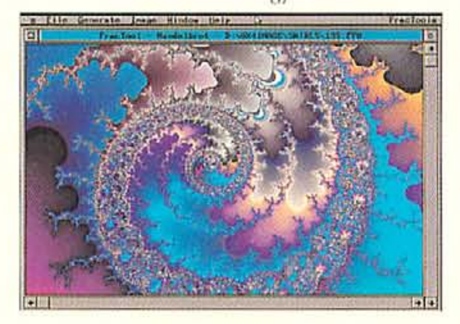
Battles of Napoleon Scenario Pack



Crosswords Plus for Windows



F-15 Strike Eagle III:
The Official Strategy Guide



Fractools III

Parsons Technology
One Parsons Drive
Hiawatha, IA 52233-0100
(800) 223-6925

CROSSWORDS PLUS FOR WINDOWS: Hmm... let's see, "11 Across. Whole..." It has eight letters and starts with a "C." [Answer: "complete"] And that's the perfect word for *Crosswords Plus for Windows*. Not only does it include 100 pre-fab puzzles, it also provides tools for creating one's own! The included puzzles are broken down into categories by size and difficulty, and features include sound clues, incorrect letter placement highlighting, and optional font and color choices. Using a passable *Windows* interface, scores are earned and partially complete puzzles can be saved for later. The beauty of this package lies in putting the power in the user's hands. Creating crossword puzzles is even more challenging than solving them, and instructors will love making themes of their own to stress vocabulary and spelling. An excellent value! IBM for Windows ($19.00). Circle Reader Service #18.

Prima Publishing
PO Box 1260BK
Rocklin, CA 95677
(916) 786-0426

F-15 STRIKE EAGLE III: THE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE: The newest addition to **Prima Publishing**'s *Secrets of the Games Series, F-15 Strike Eagle III: The Official Strategy Guide* by Lawrence T. Russell (former intelligence analyst for the U.S. Army) has just taxied onto the runway. The book offers assistance in basic flight training, air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, multiplayer missions and individual campaign missions. Special tactics are also provided for dealing with the enemy and for career progression. In addition, this strategy guide is amply illustrated with game screen shots, flight model illustrations and actual photographs. Pilots desiring assistance in gaining the most power and speed from their F-15, increasing their weapons accuracy, and learning how to maneuver with the best should check out this official strategy guide. It even includes a bonus disk with the latest update files for *F-15 Strike Eagle III* and all new historical missions based on the U.S. air strike on Iraq in 1993. IBM disk included ($24.95). Circle Reader Service #19.

Quanta Press, Inc.
1313 Fifth Street SE, Suite 223A
Minneapolis, MN 55414
(612) 379-3956

FRACTOOLS III: The latest iteration of Bourbaki's fractal graphics system comes on a CD-ROM laden with 590 fractal images for use with slide shows, screen savers, kaleidoscopes and miscellaneous graphical mayhem. Beyond the CD-ROM additions, the new version of the software supports several new graphics modes (up to 1024 x 768 x 256),

Kings Ransom

The evil approaches.
The future of the kingdom is bleak.
The people are begging for a miracle.

The kingdom has turned to you to stop the evil Lukhan from seeking revenge in his crusade to ravage the land.

Battle over 40 different types of creatures with your choice of weapons and armor. Travel to six cities and visit over 150 locations including the mysterious forest of Zur, the twisted Mazes of Kheas and the Crypt of the Lost Soul. Your quest will ultimately take you to the Mountain of Kandor to battle the vengeful Lukhan in the final struggle.

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- Travel to cities, dungeons, temples, shops, armorers and more
- Countless unpredictable scenarios and excellent graphics
- Stunning movie-like soundtrack with sound effects and speech
- Hundreds of hours of adventure gaming



ReadySoft Incorporated
30 Wertheim Court, Suite 2
Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada L4B 1B9
Tel: (416) 731-4175 Fax: (416) 764-8867

Circle Reader Service #114

VESA drivers, and S3 Windows accelerator cards. IBM with CD-ROM ($79.95). Circle Reader Service #20.

Sanctuary Woods
1875 South Grant St.
San Mateo, CA 94402
(415) 578-6340

SHELLEY DUVALL'S IT'S A BIRD'S LIFE: The first in a new edutainment series from **Sanctuary Woods** called I-tales is *Shelley Duvall's It's a Bird's Life*, an interactive "story" for children ages 3 and up. Written and narrated by Shelly Duvall, this title features a cast of lovable parrots on a journey from Los Angeles to the rain forests of the Amazon and back. Children are involved in the adventure through a variety of interactive situations as they accompany their parrot friends, Pearlie, Humpty, Mowgli, Scarlet, Austin, Connie, Gorby and George. Subjects include geography, ecology, meteorology and ornithology. An easy-to-use, mouse-driven interface takes explorers through this 60 page digital "book." Click on flowers to watch them bloom, on berries to do a jigsaw puzzle, on butterflies to see them fly, and on red words for pronunciation and definitions. In addition, one will find 11 original songs, 400 word definitions and 19 activities such as a shell game, a coloring book, connect-the-dots and jigsaw puzzles. IBM with Windows and CD-ROM, Macintosh with CD-ROM ($59.95). Circle Reader Service #21.

Swfte International, Ltd.
Stone Mill Office Park
724 Yorklyn Rd.
Hockessin, DE 19707-8701
(302) 234-1740

BICYCLE LIMITED EDITION: The battle of the *Windows* card games continues, and Swfte brings in the big guns with the most well-known name in playing cards. The Solitaire game that comes with *Windows* is no match for *Bicycle's* collection of 52 popular Solitaire variants. The Bicycle system also has a handy Help system and a statistical database that tracks your Solitaire success over time. Gambling types might sit down at the table with the *Bicycle* 5-card draw and stud poker game. While not the savviest poker dealer, it does allow the user to customize the game by determining wild-cards, betting limits, and by choosing among seven computer-opponent personalities. The Cribbage and Bridge games are decent, no-frill programs that will serve for a rainy day. While each of the four games has been done better by other companies, you'd have to do some creative shuffling to beat the excellent price-to-quality ratio offered in this collection. IBM with Windows ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #22.

WHAC-A-MOLE: *Windows* users looking for a quick and dirty way to blow off steam may find the answer to their need by senselessly pounding some defenseless rodents in *Whac-A-Mole*, a little game of malevolent, maniacal and meaningless mole mashing. The goal is simple: pick up an enormous hammer and slam it down on the skulls of tiny moles. Not as gruesome as might be expected, *Whac-A-Mole* brings a carnival classic from amusement parks across the country to the *Windows* desktop in a cartoonish presentation. No blood, no guts. Just flattened heads, bulging eyes and a medley of Oooffs!, Ouches! and Thuds! Whack enough moles and one advances to the next level. Sound effects and music are audibly polished, employing real-time sound mixing. Though *Whac-A-Mole* will be appreciated most by younger players, it can provide some welcome relief at the office, too. Now, if we could only replace the moles with digitized photos of the *CGW* staff.... IBM with Windows ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #23.



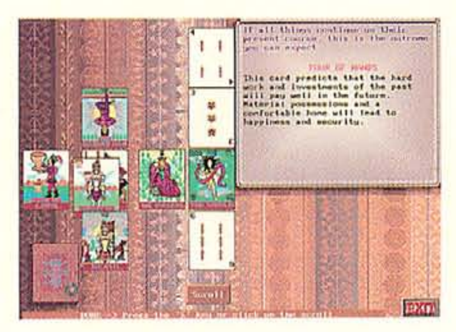
Shelley Duvall's It's a Bird's Life



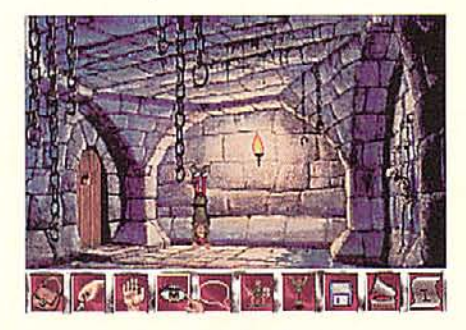
Bicycle Limited Edition



Whac-A-Mole



Rosemary West's House of Fortunes



Curse of Enchantia CD

Villa Crespo Software, Inc.
1725 McGovern Street
Highland Park, IL 60035
(708) 433-0500

ROSEMARY WEST'S HOUSE OF FORTUNES: This is the latest in **Villa Crespo**'s "Celebrity" software line. Rosemary West, L.A.'s fortune teller to the stars, is recognized as an expert on computerization of fortune telling. The program she helped create uses five different ways to prognosticate one's future. Featured are such fortune telling methods as Astrology, Numerology, I Ching, Tarot Cards and a fascinating Crystal Ball. After typing in one's name and birthday, the computer keeps track of past sessions, sends special date reminders, and allows for mystical interpretations of the past and future. Entertaining (and less vague than most fortunes one reads), *Rosemary West's House of Fortunes*, we predict, will have a long lifeline. IBM ($49.95). Circle Reader Service #24.

Virgin Interactive Entertainment
18061 Fitch Avenue
Irvine, CA 92714-9841
(800) VRGIN07

CURSE OF ENCHANTIA CD: Developed by **Core Design Limited** for **Virgin**, *Curse of Enchantia* offers the gamer a **Sierra**-like adventure puzzler that is actually more of a multi-screen puzzle game than a traditional animated adventure. Featuring an icon-based interface similar to Sierra's, this title, distributed on CD-ROM, draws the player's character (a young lad named Brad from the mortal world) into a land cursed by a powerful and malevolent witch who is intent upon employing him as an ingredient in a special restorative potion. Thus, the player's quest is to escape from this perilous land and return home safely without becoming an elixir of youth in the process. Though the interface is a bit clumsy, gamers with a strong penchant for puzzles should find it entertaining. IBM with CD-ROM ($42.99). Circle Reader Service #25.

Master of

ORION™

The Experts All Agree!

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— ***Computer Gaming World***

"Master of Orion is one of the best games of the year! Its blend of deep-space action, exploration, and strategy will keep you playing for a long, long time to come."
— ***PC Entertainment***

"A game that will not quickly become shelfware. The combinations ... make for an amazing number of different challenges."
— ***Strategy Plus***

"A perfect mix of diplomacy, war, technology, and economic mastery. ... It will keep dedicated gamers at their computers for days on end."
— ***Computer Game Review***

"Almost certain to fall into the category of 'Instant Classic'... Master of Orion is a gem."
— ***Game Bytes***

"Simply put, the most enjoyable game to come along since MicroProse did Civilization."
— ***Compute***

"I swear this game is growing on me in ways I haven't seen since Civilization, and I like it better than Civ in a lot of ways."
—**Alan Emrich, author of the book, *Sid Meier's Civilization, or Rome on 640K a Day***

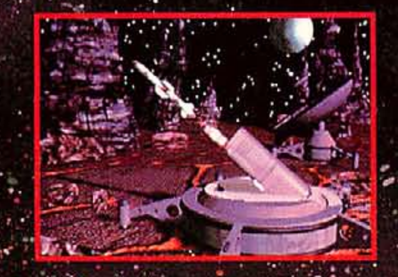
"People who haven't bought it yet: Buy it. Buy caffeine. Damn this thing is addicting!"
— *David Weinstein*

"This game has so much complexity hidden in an easy to use format that it is surprising. It may very well replace Civilization as my favorite game."
— *Marvin R. Lamb*



Actual screens may vary.





MICROPROSE
ENTERTAINMENT • SOFTWARE
SERIOUSLY FUN SOFTWARE

Circle Reader Service #60

DUNE CD: Based upon the original PC release, *Dune CD* takes the computerized version of Frank Herbert's epic novel and David Lynch's cult film of sand, spice, and expanded consciousness to new heights. The music and digitized sounds employed in this enhanced product have been remastered to take full advantage of the CD-ROM format, adding to the surreal atmosphere emanating from the computer adaptation. Full-screen video footage from the film has also been incorporated into *Dune* allowing live actors to visually and audibly move the storyline along. The result is a greater suspension of disbelief and a more enjoyable playing experience. Those who enjoy games of strategy and intrigue, and who have not yet played *Dune*, would do well to consider this "spiced up" version of Virgin's tactical adventure. IBM with CD-ROM ($99.99). Circle Reader Service #26.



Dune CD

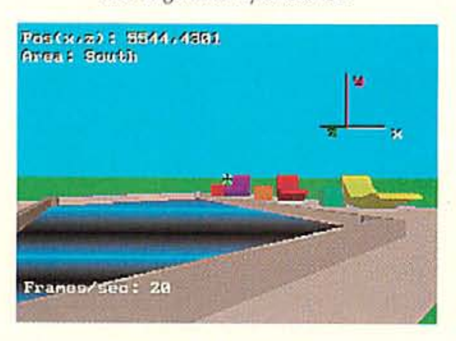
THE LEGEND OF KYRANDIA CD: For many centuries, all was peaceful in Kyrandia. The pact made between the residents of Kyrandia and the Natural kingdom provided for the mutual care and protection of both parties. Then the evil, maniacal Malcom, once court jester and friend to the king, seized control of the Kyragem, a source of great magical power, and killed the king and queen. Though Kallac, Chief of the Royal Mystics, overpowered Malcolm and magically sealed him within the walls of the royal castle, time and weakening magic has resulted in the failure of that seal and Malcolm's escape. The goal, then, for the player in **Westwood Studio**'s latest conversion to CD-ROM is to defeat Malcolm and restore peace to Kyrandia. The addition of digitized voices in *The Legend of Kyrandia CD* helps bring the world of Kyrandia to life for the player. Although this animated adventure is of the light duty variety, it is still an enjoyable, playable and highly entertaining game, and a graphical and musical delight. IBM with CD-ROM ($74.99). Circle Reader Service #27.



The Legend of Kyrandia CD

Waite Group Press
200 Tamal Plaza
Corte Madera, CA 94925
(800) 368-9369

VIRTUAL REALITY CREATIONS: The Waite Group Press has begun to make a name for itself with its book series covering the conceptual and technological fringes of computer culture. The latest in their line of "books with disks" covers the topic of Virtual Reality, and does so more thoroughly and accessibly than any other book we've seen. The book starts off with a comprehensive listing of current hardware and software available to the common reality hacker. It continues by introducing VR-heads to two heavyweight world building tools, VREAM and Superscape VRT, and then a more complete tutorial of REND386, a freeware version of which is included with the book. With REND386 and a mouse, keyboard or joystick, users can get intimate with several pre-created worlds. Also included is a "Fresnel viewer"— a pair of cardboard goggles with Fresnel lenses. The viewer is placed against the screen and the user peers through it to get a decent stereoscopic (3D vision) effect. Serious hacks will delight in the appendices that cover refitting Nintendo PowerGlove and SEGA goggles for PC use, an introduction to linear algebra and other mathematics with specific application to 3D computer graphics, and a detailed discussion of stereoscopics. If you're a VR dilettante who wants to get serious with the hobby, here's the next step. IBM ($34.95). Circle Reader Service #28.



Virtual Reality Creations

WALKTHROUGHS AND FLYBYS CD: Containing over 500 megabytes of animated presentations and accompanied by a 148-page manual, this book/CD combination introduces multimedia hopefuls and those interested in computer graphics to a wide array of ray-traced images, virtual reality demos and a vast assortment of special effects. Also included are the tips and tricks employed by many of the creators of these graphic demonstrations to assist those just entering the multimedia waters. In fact, 40 of the world's best computer animators guide one through a 3D sight and Sound Blaster audio tour of virtual homes and buildings, animated brochures, interactive educational flicks, missile and chopper rides, electrified chess matches, and even a digital spinal exam. Designed as an instructional tool and idea resource, *Walkthroughs and Flybys CD* provides an interesting look at the world of computer animated graphics. IBM with CD-ROM ($29.95). Circle Reader Service #29.


Walkthroughs And Flybys CD

Wisdom Tree
2700 E. Imperial Hwy., Bldg. A
Brea, CA 92621
(800) 772-4253

BIBLE ADVENTURES: Biblical heroes are featured characters in **Wisdom Tree**'s latest Bible-based game, *Bible Adventures*. The first of three games in this package is *Noah's Ark*, the object being to gather two of each animal and deposit them safely in the Ark. Numerous woods, forests, caverns and mountains must be searched in order to fulfill the needed quota of wildlife. *Save Baby Moses* requires the player to protect the young Hebrew toddler from Pharoah's soldiers and numerous obstacles blocking the way to safety. Third on the list is *David and Goliath*. As a young shepherd, David must round up scattered sheep and defend the family's flock. Once David has proved his abilities against wild beasts, Goliath and his shield bearer must be faced. All three titles look and play like straight Nintendo conversions. However, the stress is as much upon teaching biblical knowledge as it is on providing entertainment. Designed for ages 4 and up. IBM ($39.95). Circle Reader Service #30. CGW


Bible Adventures

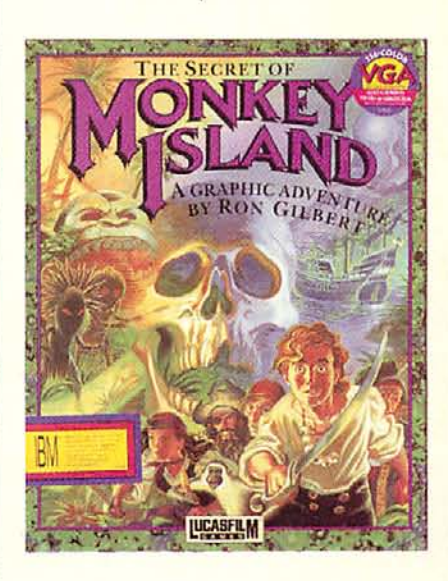
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD HALL OF FAME

The games in *Computer Gaming World*'s Hall of Fame have been highly rated by our readers over time. They have been rated for their impact on the computer gaming hobby during their peak period of influence and acceptance by our readership. Note that the dates listed for each game are the copyright dates and may precede the actual release dates. Specific formats listed are those which *CGW* has in its possession.

The Bard's Tale (Electronic Arts, 1985)
Many Formats
Chessmaster (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
Many Formats
Civilization (MicroProse, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Earl Weaver Baseball (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Empire (Interstel, 1978)
Amiga, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, Inc., 1988)
IBM
Gettysburg: The Turning Point (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM
Gunship (MicroProse, Inc., 1989)
Amiga, C-64, IBM
Harpoon (Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Kampfgruppe (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many Formats
King's Quest V (Sierra On-Line, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1989)
Amiga, IBM
Mech Brigade (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1985)
Many Formats
Might & Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
Amiga, Apple, C-64, IBM, Macintosh
M.U.L.E. (Electronic Arts, 1983)
Atari 8-bit, C-64
Pirates (MicroProse, Inc., 1987)
Many Formats
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, Inc., 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
Red Baron (Dynamix 1990)
Amiga, IBM, Macintosh
SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
Many Formats
Starflight (Electronic Arts, 1986)
Amiga, C-64, IBM, Mac, Sega
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts Entertainment Company, 1989)
Amiga, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima III (Origin Systems, Inc., 1983)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, C-64, IBM
Ultima IV (Origin Systems, Inc., 1985)
Amiga, Apple, Atari ST, IBM
Ultima VI (Origin Systems, Inc., 1990)
C64, IBM
War in Russia (Strategic Simulations, Inc., 1984)
Apple
Wasteland (Interplay Productions, Inc., 1986)
Apple, C-64, IBM
Wing Commander (Origin Systems, Inc., 1991)
Amiga, IBM, Sega
Wizardry (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
Many Formats
Zork (Infocom, 1981)
Many Formats

Induction Ceremony!

The Secret of Monkey Island
LucasArts, 1990
Many Formats



The real secret to *The Secret of Monkey Island* is humor. There is humor in the text, humor in the animation, humor in the music and humor in the plot. Who can ever forget the hilarious wordplay used in the swordfighting sequences, the non-sexist nature of the game's conclusion, the controversial instruction to insert Disk Number 256 (too many people believed that there really *was* such a disk), and the hilarious animation for the grog machine sequence? Further, the play balance in the game is perfect. Designer Ron Gilbert has a marvelous way of letting the player know what has to be accomplished in order to move to the next story segment and prodding the player along with clues that function as cues. In a very real sense, the Monkey Island series marked the SCUMM system's (LucasArts' proprietary software tools for graphic adventures) coming of age.

Top Adventure Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	10.20
2	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's	LucasArts	9.91
3	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	9.80
4	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	9.56
5	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	9.55
6	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	9.53
7	Star Control II	Accolade	9.40
8	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	9.28
9	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	9.20
10	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	9.14

Top Role Playing Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Ultima Underworld	Origin	10.29
2	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	10.02
3	Lands of Lore	Virgin	9.90
4	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	9.62
5	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	9.46
6	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	9.42
7	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	9.41
8	Ultima VII	Origin	9.34
9	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	9.34
10	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	9.25

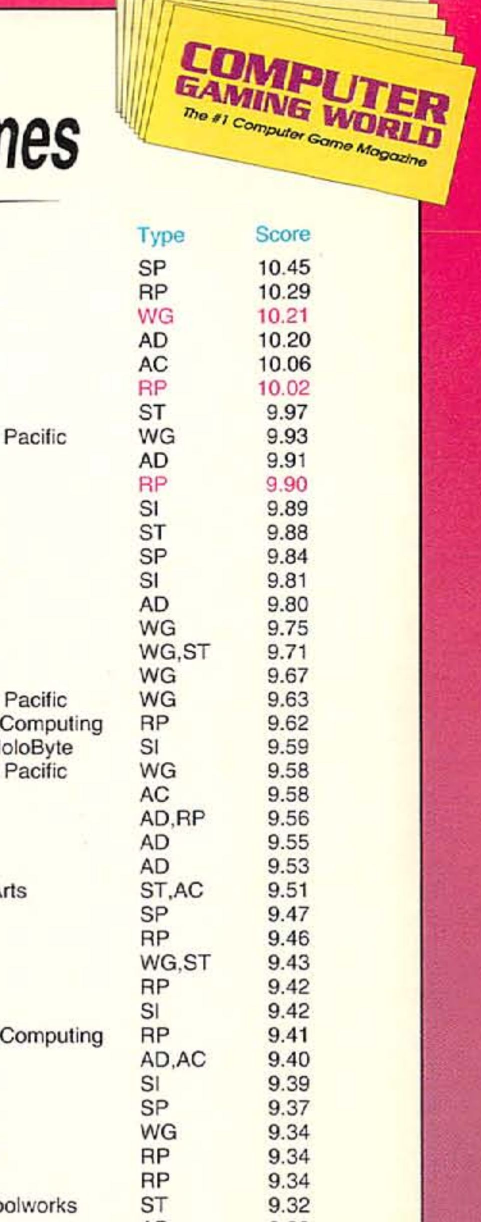
Top Simulation Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	X-Wing	LucasArts	9.89
2	World Circuit	MicroProse	9.81
3	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	9.59
4	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	9.42
5	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	9.39
6	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	9.19
7	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	9.16
8	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	9.04
9	Stunt Island	Disney	9.04
10	Silent Service II	MicroProse	9.03

Top Strategy Games

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	9.97
2	Dune II	Virgin	9.88
3	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	9.51
4	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	9.32
5	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	9.13
6	The Lost Admiral	QQP	9.05
7	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	8.98
8	Mech Warrior	Activision	8.94
9	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	8.91
10	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	8.78

Reader Poll #111



Top 100 Games

	Game	Company	Type	Score
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	SP	10.45
2	Ultima Underworld	Origin	RP	10.29
3	Warlords II	SSG	WG	10.21
4	Day of the Tentacle	LucasArts	AD	10.20
5	Wing Commander II	Origin	AC	10.06
6	Betrayal at Krondor	Dynamix	RP	10.02
7	Solitaire's Journey	QQP	ST	9.97
8	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.93
9	Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge	LucasArts	AD	9.91
10	Lands of Lore	Virgin	RP	9.90
11	X-Wing	LucasArts	SI	9.89
12	Dune II	Virgin	ST	9.88
13	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	SP	9.84
14	World Circuit	MicroProse	SI	9.81
15	Indiana Jones: Fate of Atlantis	LucasArts	AD	9.80
16	The Perfect General	QQP	WG	9.75
17	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	WG,ST	9.71
18	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	WG	9.67
19	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.63
20	Might & Magic: Darkside of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	9.62
21	Falcon 3.0	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.59
22	V For Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	9.58
	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	AC	9.58
24	Quest for Glory III	Sierra	AD,RP	9.56
25	Sherlock Holmes CD	ICOM	AD	9.55
26	The Seventh Guest	Virgin	AD	9.53
27	Syndicate	Electronic Arts	ST,AC	9.51
28	Links	Access	SP	9.47
29	Ultima Underworld II	Origin	RP	9.46
30	Warlords	SSG	WG,ST	9.43
31	Eye of the Beholder II	SSI	RP	9.42
	Aces of the Pacific	Dynamix	SI	9.42
33	Might & Magic III	New World Computing	RP	9.41
34	Star Control II	Accolade	AD,AC	9.40
35	Comanche: Maximum Overkill	NovaLogic	SI	9.39
36	Hardball III	Accolade	SP	9.37
37	Pacific War	SSI	WG	9.34
	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World	RP	9.34
	Ultima VII	Origin	RP	9.34
40	Chessmaster 3000	Software Toolworks	ST	9.32
41	Les Manly in: Lost in L.A.	Accolade	AD	9.28
42	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	SP	9.27
43	Wizardry VII: Crusaders of Savant	Sir-Tech	RP	9.25
44	Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	9.21
45	Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes	Electronic Arts	AD	9.20
46	Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe	LucasArts	SI	9.19
47	Second Front	SSI	WG	9.17
48	MiG-29	Spectrum HoloByte	SI	9.16
49	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	AC	9.14
	King's Quest VI: Heir Today...	Sierra	AD	9.14

The Computer Gaming World Poll

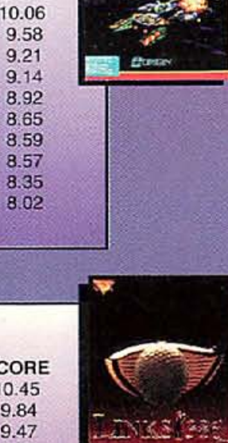
A monthly survey of the readers of Computer Gaming World Magazine.

Top Wargames



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warlords II	SSG	10.21
2	V for Victory: Velikiye Luki	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.93
3	The Perfect General	QQP	9.75
4	Conquered Kingdoms	QQP	9.71
5	Carriers at War Construction Kit	SSG	9.67
6	V for Victory: Utah Beach	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.63
7	V For Victory: Market Garden	Three-Sixty Pacific	9.58
8	Warlords	SSG	9.43
9	Pacific War	SSI	9.34
10	Second Front	SSI	9.17

Top Action Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander II	Origin	10.06
2	Wolfenstein 3-D	Id Software	9.58
3	Lemmings	Psygnosis	9.21
4	Tetris Classic	Spectrum HoloByte	9.14
5	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	8.92
6	Flashback	SSI	8.65
7	Prince of Persia 2	Broderbund	8.59
8	Out of this World	Interplay	8.57
9	Lemmings 2: The Tribes	Psygnosis	8.35
10	Spectre	Velocity	8.02

Top Sports Games



	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links 386 Pro	Access	10.45
2	Front Page Sports Football	Dynamix	9.84
3	Links	Access	9.47
4	Hardball III	Accolade	9.37
5	Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf	Accolade	9.27
6	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	8.89
7	NFL Pro League Football	Micro Sports	8.54
8	The Games: Winter Challenge	Accolade	8.50
9	PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	8.49
10	4-D Boxing	Electronic Arts	8.37

Poll is based on reader survey cards in each issue of *CGW* and published two issues subsequent. Data on more than 100 games is archived and top ten lists may contain games which scored below the Top 100 cutoff.

51	Hong Kong Mahjong Pro	Electronic Arts	ST	9.13
52	The Castle of Dr. Brain	Sierra	AD	9.11
53	Eye of the Beholder	SSI	RP	9.10
54	The Dagger of Amon Ra	Sierra	AD	9.09
	Conflict: Korea	SSI	WG	9.09
56	Ultima VII: Part Two Serpent Isle	Origin	RP	9.08
57	Empire Deluxe	New World	WG	9.07
58	Bane of the Cosmic Forge	Sir-Tech	RP	9.05
	Quest for Glory I (VGA)	Sierra	AD,RP	9.05
	The Lost Admiral	QQP	ST	9.05
61	Stunt Island	Disney	SI	9.04
	Red Storm Rising	MicroProse	SI	9.04
	Eric the Unready	Legend	AD	9.04
	Conquests of the Longbow	Sierra	AD	9.04
65	Silent Service II	MicroProse	SI	9.03
66	Quest for Glory II	Sierra	AD,RP	9.02
	Gunship 2000	MicroProse	SI	9.02
68	Police Quest 3	Sierra	AD	9.01
	Freddy Pharkas Frontier Pharmacist	Sierra	AD	9.01
70	Ultima V	Origin	RP	9.00
	Battles of Destiny	QQP	WG,ST	9.00
72	Space Quest IV	Sierra	AD	8.98
	The Incredible Machine	Dynamix	ST	8.98
	Western Front	SSI	WG	8.98
	High Command	Three-Sixty Pacific	WG	8.98
76	Carriers At War	SSG	WG	8.97
77	The Adventures of Willy Beamish	Dynamix	AD	8.96
78	Alone in the Dark	I-Motion	AD	8.95
79	Chuck Yeager's Air Combat	Electronic Arts	SI	8.94
	Mech Warrior	Activision	ST,SI	8.94
81	Clash of Steel	SSI	WG	8.93
82	F-117A	MicroProse	SI	8.92
	Oh, No! More Lemmings	Psygnosis	AC,ST	8.92
84	The Island of Dr. Brain	Sierra	ST	8.91
85	Tony La Russa Baseball II	SSI	SP	8.89
	Rise of the Dragon	Dynamix	AD	8.89
	Martian Memorandum	Access	AD	8.89
88	F-15 Strike Eagle III	MicroProse	SI	8.88
89	Indianapolis 500	Electronic Arts	SI	8.83
90	Elvira	Accolade	RP	8.82
91	Command HQ	MicroPlay	WG,ST	8.81
	Spellcasting 301: Spring Break	Legend	AD	8.81
93	Rex Nebular	MicroProse	AD	8.80
94	Gateway to the Savage Frontier	SSI	RP	8.79
95	Populous II	Electronic Arts	ST	8.78
	Hoyle Book of Games, Vol. 3	Sierra	ST	8.78
97	Heart of China	Dynamix	AD	8.75
98	Veil of Darkness	SSI	RP	8.74
99	Battlechess	Interplay	ST	8.72
	Gateway	Legend	AD	8.72

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. (ribbon icon) = Top game of type. Magenta=New Game
AD=Adventure, RP=Role Playing, SI=Simulation, ST=Strategy, WG=Wargame, AC=Action, SP=Sports

PC Research Hits List Of Top-Selling Software

August, 1993

PC Games (MS-DOS)

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Lands of Lore (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
2.	X-Wing: Imperial Pursuit (LucasArts Entertainment)
3.	X-Wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
4.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
5.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
6.	Betrayal at Krondor (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
7.	Warlords II (Strategic Studies Group)
8.	Stronghold (Strategic Simulations, Inc.)
9.	Hardball III (Accolade, Inc.)
10.	Links 386 Pro (Access Software, Inc.)
11.	Wolfenstein 3-D/Spear of Destiny (Formgen)
12.	SimCity for Windows (Maxis Software)
13.	Pirates Gold (MicroProse, Inc.)
14.	King's Quest VI CD-ROM (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
15.	Take A Break! Pinball (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
16.	Scenery Disk: USA East (SubLOGIC Corporation)
17.	Syndicate (Electronic Arts)
18.	The Legacy (MicroProse, Inc.)
19.	Wing Commander (Origin Systems, Inc.)
20.	Prince of Persia II (Brøderbund Software, Inc.)

Amiga Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	688 Attack Sub (Electronic Arts)
2.	AD&D Eye of the Beholder II (Strategic Simulations, Inc.)
3.	Overlord (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
4.	AD&D Dark Queen of Krynn (Strategic Simulations, Inc.)
5.	Legend of Kyrandia (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)

Macintosh Games

Rank	Title and Source
1.	Prince of Persia (Brøderbund Software, Inc.)
2.	SimCity (Maxis Software)
3.	Microsoft Flight Simulator (Microsoft Corporation)
4.	SimCity Supreme (Maxis Software)
5.	PGA Tour Golf (Electronic Arts)

CD-ROM Products

Rank	Title and Source
1.	The 7th Guest (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
2.	King's Quest VI (Sierra On-Line, Inc.)
3.	ROMaterial (Moon Valley)
4.	MPC Wizard (Aris Entertainment)
5.	Lord of the Rings (Interplay Productions, Inc.)
6.	Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts Entertainment)
7.	Dune (Virgin Interactive Entertainment)
8.	Just Grandma and Me (Brøderbund Software, Inc.)
9.	Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis (LucasArts Entertainment)
10.	Compton's Encyclopedia Upgrade (Compton's New Media)

This list is based on units sold by Software Etc., Babbages, Waldensoftware and Electronics Boutique. For more information, please contact PC Research at (703) 435-1025.

What You've Been Playing Lately

Every month our mailbox bulges with hundreds of Reader Input Cards from our most loyal and outspoken readers. Over the years we've found these cards to be an invaluable source of feedback. Within 10 days of releasing our latest issue we can expect to see cards pouring in with suggestions, encouragements, tirades and many good laughs, in addition to the data for our Top 100 poll. Through your efforts, we know *exactly* where we stand with our readers (you don't mince words!), and we are treated to well-articulated opinions on anything and everything related to gaming. This column is a forum for these responses and for the results of our "Playing Lately?" query on the Reader Input Card. Thanks for taking the time to fill them out...keep 'em coming!

Playing Lately? Results For CGW #111, October 1993

1. X-wing (LucasArts Entertainment)
2. Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix)
3. Warlords II (Strategic Studies Group)
4. Lands of Lore (Westwood Studios)
5. Civilization (MicroProse, Inc.)
6. Front Page Sports Football Pro (Dynamix)
7. Might & Magic: Darkside/World of Xeen (New World Computing)
8. Falcon 3.0x/MiG-29 (Spectrum HoloByte)
9. Syndicate (Electronic Arts)
10. Links 386 Pro (Access Entertainment)

Do You Remember When We Met?

Our "short answer" question for issue #111 asked our readers to think back to their first computer gaming experience.

"The first computer game I encountered was "Lunar Lander" on an HP programmable calculator, about 1976. You entered the amount of fuel to burn and it computed your new height and speed."

— Vernon Lee, Fremont, CA

"My first game was Wasteland, and I'm still trying to find a CRPG as good..."

— Miles Goosens, Nashville, TN

"First computer game? Wumpus! Remember hunting the wumpus? Used to play it on a mainframe (IBM 360) through a DECwriter (that's paper — no screen). Gee, I'm not that old! Am I?"

— T. Madden, St. Louis, MO

"Adventure was my first game. It was on an IBM 370. That game created a whole world in your mind in a way that the latest in graphics don't always do. It's not just the clock speed or the dot pitch..."

— David Martin, Albany, CA

"First game was Starflight. I snuck downstairs one morning about 4:00 am to look at my dad's new computer. I saw a directory, STARFLIGHT, and typed the first name on the list. I have been hooked ever since."

— Andrew Hakes, Mt. Morris

"In college I spent most of a Thanksgiving holiday playing the Dallas game on my roommate's PC. It took three of us several days of near nonstop kibbitzing to finish it. Also, being brash college youth, we would drink beer and play an air traffic controller game. Can you blame me for getting hooked (on games, that is)"

— T. Mesarch, Washington, D.C.



The Patch File

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of possible configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches seem to be breeding at an exponential rate. Until the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs, *Computer Gaming World* publishes this list of the latest updates of which we are aware.

These patches can usually be downloaded from most major networks (e.g., CompuServe or GEnie), but can also be obtained from individual software publisher's own BBSs or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase. We continue to urge publishers to keep us updated on the latest versions/patches to their games.

("**" indicates new files)

Air Bucks Version 1.21: Corrects lock-up and mouse compatibility problems. 8/06/93

Ambush at Sorinor Version 1.02: Adds a speed control option for fast machines, replaces several bad mission descriptions, and fixes the AI for VIPs and escorts. 6/17/93

Battles of Destiny V1.1 Patch: Enhancements and bug fixes include: Patrol Mode, Map Editor, and two player modem enhancements. 5/06/93

Buzz Aldrin Race Into Space Version 1.0b: Fixes a lock-up bug and allows the removal of some files from the hard drive. 7/06/93

Caesar Patch: Allows players to use Impressions' game with disk compression utilities, and corrects the "culture" problem. 5/19/93

Carriers at War Construction Kit Patch: Fixes the "CAP" bug and a few other minor problems. 7/13/93

Harpoon Version 1.32A Upgrade: Makes changes to the Harpoon game system. 5/18/93

Imperial Pursuit Fix: In the original version, it can be difficult to lock-on to a target with missiles under certain system configurations. This patch should correct this problem. 7/08/93

Indy Jones/Atlantis 486 Patch: Allows one to play the game on a 486 without color problems or errors. 5/26/93

Jordan in Flight SVGA Patch: Allows owners of Diamond Stealth, Diamond Stealth 24 and Orchid Fahrenheit 1280 Plus video cards to run the game in SVGA. 5/21/93

Jump Jet Update: Corrects the joystick problems some players are reporting and some other compatibility problems. 5/18/93

Kings Quest VI CD-ROM Patch: Fixes the problem with the disappearing ball in the Endless Desert Temple Stone Wall trap. 8/24/93

** **Lands of Lore Version 1.11A Patch:** Fixes a number of small bugs including the inability to retrieve Dawn's second key. 9/08/93

Lands of Lore Sound Card Patch: Allows multiple sound cards to be used at one time. Now includes Waveblaster/SB16 support. You need this patch only if you use more than one sound card. 8/16/93

** **Links 386 Complete V1.11 Update:** Contains both the Link 386 Pro EXE version 1.11 and a collection of new VESA drivers for various video cards. 9/03/93

Omar Sharif on Bridge Upgrade (IBM/Windows): The latest version of Interplay's bridge game for Windows. 9/03/93

Patriot Version 1.1: The long-awaited patch to Three-Sixty's Gulf War simulation. 7/27/93

Pirates Gold Patch: Corrects the "evil person in the city" crash, the "mission from the governor" crash, and the V1 switch should now function as stated in the README file. 7/19/93

Realms of Arkania Disk 3 Fix: The first print run of this game was missing some data from disk 3. You only need this file if your BLADE directory has 48 files and 3,030,380 bytes in it. 6/23/93

Realms of Arkania Update #1: Corrects the "Skeletarius" problem, among others. 7/01/93

** **Red Sky At Morning V1.33:** The latest version of SimCan's new wargame. 9/18/93

Rules of Engagement 2 Version 1.05: Latest version of the Omnitrend/Impressions' space war simulation. 8/01/93

** **Rules of Engagement 2 V1.05 to 1.06 Update:** Patch for those having problems running the game with a Viper graphics cards. 10/09/93

Rules of Engagement 2 Campaign Disk Update: Updates Campaign Disk 1 to version 1.01. This update adds 9 new Breach 2 IGS links to the campaign "Operation Hammer." This update is only useful if you're playing the game in conjuction with Breach 2. 8/30/93

Shanghai II Version 1.04 Update (Mac): Resolves incompatibilities with After Dark and SuperClock, and fixes a 32-bit addressing problem. If you are getting random crashes or freezes, this update is for you. 8/20/93

The Seventh Guest Fix: Updated sound cards drivers, installation program and player program (requiring only 450K memory). 7/28/93

** **Strike Commander/Tactical Operations 1 Fix:** Converts old Strike Commander save games to the Tactical Operations format. Only needed if you wish to run Strike Commander saves created prior to Tactical Operations installation. 9/30/93

Tony LaRussa II Patch: Fixes bugs in SSI's baseball simulation. 5/21/93

Unlimited Adventures Version 1.1 Patch: In addition to new files for the software, this patch contains a supplement to the game's manual. 5/21/93

V For Victory 3.1 Upgrade (IBM): Upgrades Utah Beach, Velikiye Luki, and Market Garden Versions 2.0 to version 3.1. 8/19/93

V For Victory: Velikiye Luki Version 3.1 (Mac): Upgrades the Macintosh version 2.0 to 3.1. 7/09/93

V For Victory: Market Garden Version 3.1 (Mac): Upgrades the Macintosh version 3.0 to 3.1. 7/08/93

V For Victory: Gold Juno Sword Version 4.01 (Mac): Upgrades the Macintosh version 4.0 to 4.01. 8/28/93

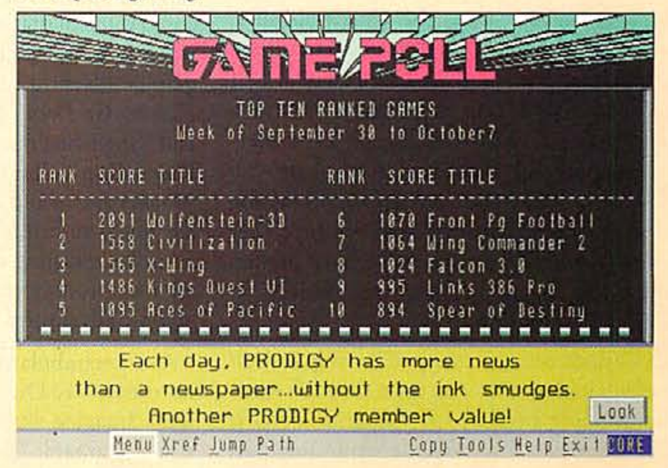
** **War In Russia 1.1 Upgrade:** Fixes three bugs and adds an enhancement. 10/04/93

** **Warlords Version 1.1.5 Update (Macintosh):** Updates any version of Warlords Mac to V1.1.5. 10/09/93

** **WW2: Battles of the South Pacific:** Corrects a problem with the ranking system. 9/21/93

The PRODIGY Weekly Top Ten

Computer Gaming World is Prodigy's on-line games expert. Look for us in their Game Center, a forum where users read articles posted on-line by *CGW* and exchange messages on the bulletin boards (we can be reached there at EXPT40B). The Prodigy Game Poll is run by Prodigy based on a list of games provided by *CGW* and is updated weekly. Note that it is not a cumulative rating over time (like the *CGW* Top 100 Poll). Instead, the Prodigy Game Poll is a weekly "Snapshot" of game popularity with gamers rating their favorites on a 1 - 10 scale. The highest total point earners make their Top 10. We provide this data to our readers as another barometer of "what's hot" in computer gaming.



RANK	SCORE	TITLE	RANK	SCORE	TITLE
1	2091	Wolfenstein-3D	6	1070	Front Pg Football
2	1568	Civilization	7	1064	Wing Commander 2
3	1565	X-Wing	8	1024	Falcon 3.0
4	1486	Kings Quest VI	9	995	Links 386 Pro
5	1095	Aces of Pacific	10	894	Spear of Destiny



Rumors To Di For

by Alec Reginald Forsythe III

My source—since I never reveal one, let's call her 'D' for short—didn't want to meet at "Buck House" (the edifice you Yanks refer to as Buckingham Palace). She said she was afraid of the tabloids and I assured her that she had unnecessary anxiety on that score. "After all," I reassured her, "I'm not THAT famous." Nonetheless, she said she had some information about a computer game and, since she muttered something about a "prince" and she wanted to meet beside the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum, I assumed she was going to tell me something about **QQP**'s *Merchant Prince* game.

So, I found myself in the Underground, taking the tube to my rendezvous with D. Actually, I love the Underground, especially since so many stations are very different from each other. Some of the older stations have tiled, arched corridors that end in well-worn stairs; others are musty dungeons with escalators that are so old that the steps are made of wood; and still others have ultra-modern escalators or use ordinary elevators to move passengers to street level. In the States, the subway stations all seem to be the same age and tend to have the same look. In jolly olde London, it's more like *SimCity 2000* with new stations added according to the population's needs. Of course, *SC 2000* should have shipped by the time you read this column, but like London, there's a lot of life in the old city, yet. It seems that **Dux**, the Unix publisher, has created a multi-player *SimCity* that runs on workstations for Unix-based networks. I personally can't wait until there is also a multi-player *SimCity* available on a commercial network for those of us who are still PC-based. Some talks were apparently going on with *The Imagination Network* (nee' *The Sierra Network*), but appear to have broken down, just like the train I was awaiting at King's Cross Station.

It's rather eerie, actually. The only station I've ever had to non-stop (pass through without stopping because of a security alert) is King's Cross. It has a plaque reminding passengers about those who died in a fire some years back, and it is one of the stations where I get particularly nervous if the train is late. My mind wandered from imagined emergencies in the London underground to a rumor I had heard at the European Computer Trade Show. Folks were talking there about a *Rescue 911* license that had just been signed by **Capstone**. Now, as much as I like being in on a game design, I certainly hoped that no rescue was going to be needed. I'll keep my emergencies in games, thank you.

Fortunately, my train arrived before my ill-placed anxiety could bring on cardiac arrest. The doors opened with a pneumatic Bronx cheer that sounded vaguely like some of the sound effects in *The Journeyman Project*. I mentioned it to the old man seated next to me and reading (or at least, looking at) The Sporting Life. He merely said, "Sorry, I'm waiting until it comes out in MPC format. **Gametek**, you know." Actually, I didn't know, but now that I did, I couldn't wait to pass it on.

I managed to reach my goal and wandered through the tunnel toward the "Way Out." You Yanks hang onto the anachronist Latinism, "Exit," but we believe in posting signs in our OWN language, as opposed to appropriating and diminishing someone else's (ahem!). If most of you Yanks saw a "Way Out" sign, you'd think it was something weird, an advertisement for a bizarre concept of some kind. The only way out product I could think of that was coming down the pike was **Humongous Entertainment**'s upcoming graphic adventure, tentatively titled *Bobo and Fletcher Go Deep Into The Congo*. It's Tarzan and King Kong meet Space Ghost and Speed Racer. Ron Gilbert, the wry wit behind the *Monkey Island* and *Putt-Putt* series of games, has opted to bring back talking simians and Saturday morning-style animation for his latest humorous romp through the world of graphic adventures. Now, that's "way out."

As I perambulated through the tunnel toward the Way Out, I read the graffiti on the wall. Imagine my surprise when I read a scrawl that said, "Welcome to Menzobarranzan—City of the Drau." I hadn't realized that *The Legacy*, the OTHER Times bestseller about Dark Elves in the Forgotten Realms, had made such an impact on merrie olde England. I couldn't resist. I penned an addendum, "Coming soon from **SSI**—To Be Distributed By **U.S. Gold**." I wasn't sure the deal had actually been signed, but I figured anyone who read graffiti in underground tunnels would attempt to ascertain its veracity before placing an order.

Arriving at the British Museum, I must have stunned the crowd with my insensitivity to the treasures around me. Hurrying past monuments like a shrine to Apollo, the winged lions and bulls from Ashurbanipal, and the Rosetta Stone itself, I finally reached D's side. I could see her distinctive profile, even behind the veil, so I whispered, "And where's your husband, today?" She glared at me. How was I supposed to know that she was on the offs with him? It's not like their marital troubles would be front page news, is it? How paranoid could she get? Anyway, she said he was off inspecting some naval vessel, and then he was going to talk to some computer game designer. The computer game designer was Matthew Stibb, a good chap for an Oxford graduate. Somewhat eccentric, though, having majored in History.

Still, D managed to inform me that Stibb was working on a naval simulation with role-playing elements. The game would use detailed 3-D models with a smooth-scrolling capacity, due to the fact that the whole sim was running in protected mode, and the live graphics would be interlaced with film from the U.S. Department of Defense's film archives. According to D, it's an extremely rich CD-ROM product that's due out in the first quarter of 1994.

I asked D about *Merchant Prince*, but she gave me another one of those looks. Really, you'd swear I'd said a dirty word or something. Or, maybe it was all those flashbulbs going off in our faces. Maybe, since I was wearing my Beefeater uniform as a disguise, it would have made more sense to have met at Buckingham Palace in the first place. CGW


Its graphics are lush and colorful, with skewed perspectives and grotesque characters that could have been lifted from vintage Warner Brothers cartoons.
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